

THE HEIR OF MILLINGFORD REACH,

BY AMETHYST WAYNE.

[NO. 2.—TO BE COMPLETED IN FOUR NUMBERS.]

CHAPTER III.

It was a gay week which ensued. The Clayton party remained at Eglantine Terrace, and several additions were made to the already large circle from London and Brighton. I had fairly won an enviable place among them. Catharine Cathart departed from her stately dignity enough to abruptly disclaim my faint suggestion of intrusion; and pretty Madge gave me a reproachful glance.

The latter, I perceived, was nothing loth to try a flirtation, but I shrewdly suspected *it was as much to pique Edward Armadale* from his sudden and seemingly violent interest in Eveline Eaton, who, having been always treated like one of the family, was still mingling among the guests in the drawing-room.

"Don't let us hear another word about leaving," said my host, peremptorily. And, nothing loath, I forbore further speech or thought of intrusion, and allowed myself to enjoy to the utmost this sunny life of careless pleasure; while at the same time I kept strict watch of John Jourdain.

I managed to stumble upon Antoine very early one morning, before his master was out of his chamber. But a stone post

would not have been more callous or uncommunicative.

I only obtained these impressions: that Antoine was a faithful servant, and generously paid for his services; and that he seemed only affected when I accidentally mentioned that his master looked to me like a delicately constituted man. He took a great deal of unnecessary pains, I thought, to convince me that Mr. Jourdain was in perfect health, never sick; indeed without the first ailment. Hardly understanding why, I made a note of the circumstance. I dwelt upon it more earnestly the next day. We were preparing to set forth in carriages, to have a picnic at some famous old castle ruins. Mr. Jourdain had proposed the idea, and was most enthusiastic in the arrangement of the day's pleasure. He had quietly suggested that little May should be one of the party, and thus made sure of Eveline Eaton's presence, however reluctant she might be about joining the party. I saw through his fondness for the child, but was glad enough myself of Eveline's company to wish him success in the manœuvre.

Everything was ready. The baskets all packed and loaded into the carriage which was to take the necessary servants. Most

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of the ladies, with parasols, shawls, and hats, were gathered in a chattering, smiling group at the portal steps. The gentlemen were at the stables, arranging the necessary seats and counting out the required number, when Mr. Jourdain came slowly down-stairs, and passed me as I was lingering in the hall, waiting for a scarf Miss Madge had commissioned one of the maids to hunt up for her especial benefit. I was struck by a peculiar look on his face, — a gray-pallor, thickening his usually waxy transparency of complexion. Antoine was stowing packages into the elegant barouche of his master, and Mr. Jourdain, looking at him intently, did not perceive my leaning figure behind the great statue of Minerva.

He evidently tried his best to draw the man's attention without betraying his presence to the others, but could not do it until he gave one quick, peculiar note, half whistle, half song. Antoine dropped the dressing-case he was putting under the seat as if he had received a bullet in his arm, and looked around for the source of the call, and then came promptly up the steps.

"Curses upon the luck!" said John Jourdain between his teeth. "This is to be one of my days, Antoine. I cannot go. Manage it for me, Antoine, and quickly. It will not be long." And, having said this, he stepped out upon the veranda with the rest of the party.

Antoine stood a moment as if in a brown study, and then dashed up-stairs. Before he returned, the girl brought Madge's scarf, and I went out with it. I stood, therefore, close beside him, when Mr. Jourdain turned around at the sound of his name in Antoine's voice.

"What is it, Antoine? I have given you all my orders."

The docile servitor advanced with a grave, imperturbable face, extending a letter, and said, —

"I beg your pardon, sir. I ought to have given you this letter last night. I forgot it, and kept it in my pocket."

The master took it, carelessly broke the seal, and then uttered an exclamation of regret and indignation.

"You careless villain!" ejaculated he; "you have ruined my day's pleasure. I might have gone over last night, if you had done your duty and delivered the letter. Now, good people, pity me, and give me your condolences: I must give up the pic-

nic, and go to the next town on important business."

A murmur of disappointment and regret came from all sides.

"Oh, do postpone the business! Surely a few hours will not matter! Or we will wait until tomorrow. You must go with us. We shall lose the life of the party."

"I cannot. It is utterly impossible. I am an idle fellow usually, but when I do receive a summons it is always imperative. Don't add to my disappointment by useless importunities. Go and enjoy this superb day, and tell me about it tomorrow. You will be sure to see me back again tomorrow, colonel. I can't resist the attractions of Eglantine Terrace."

He spoke these words hurriedly, and it seemed to me with almost desperate exertion. There were great beads of perspiration on his forehead, and a wide circle of pallor around his lips.

"Come, Antoine, there is no time to lose," he said, and began to descend the steps. I did not observe whether any one else followed him, but I lost not a single look, and I was sure that with every added step his limbs faltered and stiffened. Nay, I was quite positive that when he gained the carriage-door Antoine put him into it by sheer strength, as he would have lifted a dead weight. The carriage whirled away out of sight, however, and, somewhat subdued in spirit, our party was distributed into the remaining barouches.

My best efforts did not secure me a seat in the same vehicle with Eveline Eaton. Madge Cathart, as she established her pink muslin flounces on the cushioned seat, beckoned gayly for me to come beside her, and Edward Armadale and Rose Clayton followed. A glance at the clouded face of the stately Catharine confirmed my suspicion that her interest in John Jourdain was beyond that of a passing acquaintance. I was glad she was in another carriage when my companions began discussing the unexpected summons in somewhat free fashion.

"Well," exclaimed Rose Clayton, as we rolled away from the house, "of all mysterious, inexplicable men, John Jourdain is the strangest. This is the twentieth time, to my certain knowledge, that he has thus abruptly retreated from an engagement. I can't make him out. He is the most gifted creature — did n't it seem to you that you were listening to wizard music the other

day? I declare my flesh was creeping in cold shivers! But it is an uncanny brilliancy after all. I never feel sure but he is going to fly up to the moon, or go down into some yawning pit which may open to swallow him. Do you believe he had an engagement, Ned?"

"I really am not competent to decide," replied Ned Armadale. "I know one thing: I should pitch that block of a John out of my sight in short order. He seems to me the one who hatches the mischief. I really believe he is a perfect tyrant. Did you see how he clutched at Jourdain's arm?"

"What is Mr. Jourdain's business?" asked I.

"Faith! that's the greatest mystery of all. Everybody wonders, but no one is any wiser for his curiosity. He is likely to receive, by and by, a splendid estate; but he has certainly as yet come into possession of only a narrow pittance. Yet he is the most fastidious fellow, and lives like an Eastern prince. All our fashionable people are crazy to secure him for their summer festivities. He has a little place some ten miles off, — his Bird's Nest, he calls it, — but it is a perfect fairy temple; every room is a picture. Many a nobleman's son might envy him its possession. By the way, Miss Madge, Lady Conmore is quite indignant at your mother for her success in keeping the lion so long. He has certainly been remarkably gracious. I never knew him to favor one locality for such a lengthy period. I suspect our fair Catharine has enslaved the invincible one, for he promised to be at Conmore House a week ago."

"Yes, mamma is quite proud of the distinction. But he certainly stays willingly. No one puts the least restraint upon his movements. Oh, see! there is a party of gentlemen equestrians!"

"Jack Martin and Hal Hudson, as I live! Ho, Jack! where are you bound?" shouted young Armadale.

The result was that our party received the addition of six young gentlemen, who pranced along by the carriages on their mettlesome steeds in the highest spirits. I counted it a very fortunate circumstance, for it released me from my attendance upon the ladies of the family, and gave me opportunity, when we reached the picturesque picnic-ground, to saunter away with Eveline Eaton and her little charge, and enjoy a long and confidential conversation. More

than that, it gave me the first link in the chain of evidence for which I had come to search.

The somewhat peculiar circumstances of our first meeting had entirely removed all formality and reserve, and Eveline and I chatted with the freedom of old friends. I told her my whole history, disguising nothing of the poverty and obscurity of my parentage, and the hard struggling with which I had fought my way toward a position warranting me an honorable maintenance. And she, in return, related through what trying, bitter experience she had passed before finding so welcome and genial a home as she enjoyed at Eglantine Terrace. A certain similarity in our past lives drew our sympathies still more closely, and each one was ready to enter into the other's emotion.

"You may imagine what a paradise the Terrace and its genial, kind-hearted inmates made for me after my dreary experience in other quarters," said Eveline; "nor can you wonder at my nervous terror at the threats of this man, who promises to be the serpent in my Eden. It is a perfect mystery to me what he can find in the humble, penniless governess to draw his thoughts or attentions, when he might, I fancy, win for himself the lovely and portioned daughter of Colonel Cathart. It is so unlike his character, I cannot think of it as genuine, disinterested love, that would gain my pity and respect; but I am all the time wondering what can be the motive. For I do not believe John Jourdain sets himself so zealously to the accomplishment of any object without a selfish or sordid motive."

"He is a man of mystery. From the conversation in the carriage, I judge that long acquaintance does not give any better insight into his character or surroundings," replied I.

"I have a nameless horror of him. His anger at my persistent refusal of his suit was something frightful. There was one circumstance that has puzzled me sorely. He kept repeating that he always accomplished his ends, and that, if I refused his devoted love, I should yet be thankful to accept his cold regard, to escape misery and shame. And while he was saying it, his face white with passion, he called me by my mother's maiden name instead of my own. It perplexed me to know how he found it out, for I am sure I have never mentioned

my mother's name while here at the Terrace."

A great light broke upon me. I seized her hand and wrung it joyously.

"I know the name too. It is Millingford!" cried I.

She turned her brown eyes upon me in perplexity and amazement.

"I do not understand you. Her name was Ada Derne before she was married. She used to live somewhere in this shire."

I was a little disappointed, nevertheless still very glad, and kept my clasp of her hand.

"I know the whole secret," said I. "My dear Miss Eveline, allow me to congratulate you. You stand the second heir to a very large property, and John Jourdain's claim is good for nothing when yours is advanced. You are right: he has a sordid motive for his persistent and unmanly suit."

The soft brown eyes wore a look of almost pitiful distress.

"Surely you would not jest with me; you, of all others, who must understand what a bitter disappointment it would be to find myself mocked with deceitful hopes," she faltered.

"Not for the world, my dear Miss Eveline. You have certainly heard about the great Millingford estate. Let me tell you the whole story, and the true reason of my visit at Eglantine Terrace." And thereupon I told her every word.

She was painfully agitated, and could scarcely bring herself to believe in the glowing hopes I held out.

"It is too beautiful. To be free from anxiety, from dependence, from the wearing chain of even such light servitude as this; to be able to indulge my tastes; to respond to the calls of charity. Oh, indeed it will make you seem like a fairy prince, if it proves true," she cried, between sparkling tears clinging to the silken eyelash, and joyful smiles breaking over the rosy lips.

"Ah!" cried I, stung by the sudden remembrance, "it will raise between us the very barrier I dreaded. I had forgotten that. You will be the wealthy owner of that proud old estate, I the struggling, nameless republican, and all my fondest hopes will be wrecked."

The soft eyes smiled through the tears, and a faint color stole into her cheek.

"I do not understand!" — began she, and paused.

"No wonder," returned I, with almost angry vehemence. "It were something more than absurd for me to explain to you all the whirl of convincing thought which has just gone scathing through my brain. Whatever other folly I have been guilty of, I have never been accused of fostering a mercenary spirit. I am no fortune-hunter."

"No one would ever attribute such unworthy motives to you," said she, gently. "Whatever comes from this affair, I shall only look upon you as the most kindly and self-forgetful friend I have known."

I was lost a few moments in moody silence, then brightening, and quite ashamed of my selfishness, I began to ask her for the proofs of her being the true and legal heir of Ada Derne.

"All my mother's papers are in a little box which I deposited with an humble friend of mine, a woman who was once a servant of my mother's. She keeps a small shop in Liverpool, and as I was journeying to and fro, companion to a sick lady, after father's death, I left them with Nancy Lermont for safe keeping. I can send for them by express and receive them in three days, certain."

"You had better do so. Or stay. I must go to Dingley Moor and communicate this discovery to Squire Ned. Had you not better write to the woman, giving her directions to deposit them in my keeping, and I will run up on the express train and get them. Until matters are legally arranged, we had best keep silence about the whole affair."

"I will write the moment we return. If it should prove true, how shall I ever be able to repay this kindness? But I dare not trust myself to credit it. The Millingford heirs will yet appear."

"Squire Ned thinks not. He does not believe that Ralph Millingford married, and he has full confidence in the old man's dying impression, that the wronged son was waiting to meet him on the other side of the grave. However, he has sent out very definite advertisements to America, such as he could not scatter in Great Britain, asking the heirs of Ralph Millingford to come forward and receive a certain legacy. We shall hear from them speedily if there are any such in existence. I shall go over to Dingley Moor at once with the good news. Squire Ned will exult at his penetration,

for he declared this Jourdain had the clew he could not discover. No wonder the man is so persistent. A disinterested suitor, indeed!"

"It explains everything for me. I knew it was not for myself he sought me. Catharine Cathart is far more to his aristocratic tastes; but the bulk of Colonel Cathart's fortune, you know, is entailed upon the only son, who is in Germany at the university, and the dowry will be comparatively small for the daughters. I have heard Mrs. Cathart lament the arrangement. Yes, now I understand Mr. John Jourdain's motives thoroughly."

"It's a fortunate thing for us that he was kept away from the picnic today. He would have been likely to spoil this explanation of ours."

"Yes, I was devoutly thankful to the unknown writer of that letter. My poor father! would that he had lived to know of this brilliant prospect. Half the pangs of death were occasioned by his anxiety for me."

"How singularly alike our past experience has been! except that it was my father who died when I was a mere child, and left my poor mother to grieve and agonize over her son's desolate lot, and with you the mother was the first to go. Perhaps they are able to look down upon us now and give their blessing to our friendship."

A solemn shadow crept upon her face, and I myself was silent a long time. It was broken by little May, who had all the while been frisking amid the flowers, with her pet spaniel, under the eye of her governess, but not within hearing.

She came dancing toward us, with her wee hands stained with berries.

"O Miss Eaton, may I go now to the tables? I am so thirsty! May is so tired!"

I took the dear little creature into my arms and carried her to the grassy slope in the shade of the stately ruins, where the servants were busy setting out the luncheon. Madge Cathart playfully accused me of *truncy*, and summoned me to her side, and I saw no more of Eveline that day.

On the next I announced my intention of taking a trip to the next town. My plea to the colonel was a little needed replenishment to my wardrobe, but at the town where my host's carriage left me I took the train and posted off to Dingley Moor. Squire Ned was as much astonished as he

was delighted with the intelligence that I brought.

"Glorious, glorious!" exclaimed he, his genial face all aglow with honest delight. "It will indeed rejoice my heart to see the old house thrown open again. It is something of a disappointment that it should be none of poor Ralph's people, but it is infinitely better than that John Jourdain should have it."

"How came you to find him out, Squire Ned? he seems universally admired and courted," I said.

"Ah! he showed his cloven foot one day. He declared the other claims forfeited, and proposed to enter into possession at once. I coolly informed him he would not obtain my consent until I had exhausted every method of search for the proper heirs. He fired at that word, and was fairly insolent. I angered him still more by my contemptuous coolness, and he went into a perfect spasm of rage. I was frightened at the man's wild looks and livid paleness, but that French valet he carries around with him, as a lady does her dressing-maid, came and actually picked him up and trotted him off. I don't know which amazed me most, the master's passion or the servant's nonchalance. Mr. John Jourdain has hated me ever since that day, and I have n't cherished a remarkable degree of affection for his highness. I am thankful some one else is to have the dear old place, and that I may still be able to visit at Millingford Reach.

"I want to see the lady. You say that she is well bred and refined. So was the mother; so should be any one who assumes a place vacated by that courtly old gentleman. Well, well, this is better than I expected. What a relief it will be to have the affair off my mind. I must see the young woman, Romaine: I must pay a visit to the Terrace. You shall give me one train the start of you, and I'll be there when you arrive, so that none need suspect your absence was connected with me. What do you say?"

"That it is a good arrangement. I know you will be relieved when you see Eveline Eaton. You will not be concerned for the dignity of the old place, after a single glance into her face."

Therefore it happened when I returned to Eglantine Terrace, Squire Ned was among the group on the veranda, and came

forward as eagerly as the others to give me greeting.

I glanced along the group. Eveline Eaton was there, looking brightly happy. John Jourdain was nowhere to be seen. I was just about to whisper an inquiry concerning him, when his carriage appeared on the avenue, with the ubiquitous Antoine by his side; and I learned by the conversation, that it was his first appearance since the morning of the picnic.

He looked ghastly pale still, and there were hollow circles beneath his eyes.

"Why, Jourdain, man, you have been ill," exclaimed Colonel Cathart, in a tone of consternation, as he advanced to meet him.

"Nonsense, my good host; don't you know I am never ill?" replied John Jourdain, with just the slightest shade of annoyance.

"But you look as if you had just emerged from a severe sickness. You are as pale as death."

"Well, I can't help that. I assure you I am very well. I was never particularly ruddy, like you jolly squires; I have been working hard over business matters, and have had little sleep at night, which may account for whatever change your sharp eyes espy. And how do I find all these godd people? And how passed off the famous picnic? And what is the next entertainment on the programme?"

He asked these questions in a gay voice, and moved rather impatiently from Colonel Cathart into the group of ladies and gentlemen. When his eye fell upon Squire Ned, there went a dull red flush over his face, and almost instinctively he turned to look at Eveline Eaton. She preserved an admirably composed countenance, and his forehead cleared again. Meantime the ladies closed around him with animated descriptions of a proposed excursion and ball, and he seemed entirely absorbed by their remarks. I seized the opportunity to drop an eager question in Squire Ned's ear.

"You have talked with Eveline Eaton. What do you think of her?"

"She is an angel. I am quite overjoyed. It will be pleasant enough to see the old house open again, but to have her there, and you, you sly young dog, it is quite too delightful."

"Me!—Squire Ned,—I do not understand you," stammered I.

Pooh, pooh! As if I did n't know any-

thing about young folks. I saw how you were situated the first time you mentioned her name at Dingley Moor; and since I've been here, I've taken pains to watch her face when I talked about you. Heigh ho! it's pretty much the same story everywhere. I was a young fellow, head over heels in love myself, once; it's likely I should n't know the symptoms."

"You are entirely mistaken, squire," answered I, with some heat, feeling my forehead and ears tingle beneath a burning blush. "I admire Miss Eaton very much; I am sure he will be a fortunate man who obtains her; but it will not be a poor, nameless adventurer, like myself, who will marry the heiress of all that wealth."

"Nonsense! I say again," said the squire, clapping me on the shoulder; "you deserve her, lad; I shall be the first to say that."

"I shall never ask her, though I am utterly miserable without her. I shall see her established in her rights, and then I shall go home to America," answered I, in stubborn pride.

"Don't be too positive, my lad. These sweet little girls have a way of proposing themselves which is irresistible. If she finds that great estate too much care for her delicate strength, and meekly begs you to look out for it, for her sake, how are you going to refuse?"

I could not help laughing at his comical face, despite my annoyance. But we were speedily separated by the confusion attendant upon the appearance of a servant bearing a silver tray fairly piled with letters. A laughing, clamorous group surrounded him at this palpable proof of the arrival of the mail. I saw Eveline Eaton receive one, and slip away with it into the house, and I knew that I had something to do with its communication, when I obeyed her beckoning gesture, and followed her down into the gardens, after her return to the veranda.

It was a very grave face which turned to me, and I exclaimed, anxiously, —

"What have you heard?"

"A gentleman has been to Nancy and taken away the box of papers. He told her that I sent for it, and the poor thing believed it. There can be no question about the person, Mr. Romaine. He holds every proof that could establish my claim."

I tried to hide the dismay which fell upon me.

"We will compel him to give them up.

The woman can describe him. Besides, she can establish your identity herself, if she knew your mother while she was at Millingford Reach. Don't be dismayed, yet."

Nevertheless, it was with a deepened conviction of fresh difficulties in our path that I went to Squire Ned, and got him away up in my chamber for a confidential talk.

CHAPTER IV.

John Jourdain seemed conscious that there was a little under-current of conjecture and suspicion concerning his singular departure, and it seemed to me that he was making stupendous exertions to overcome and remove it. He became quite the life of the place. Even I was obliged to confess him one of the most brilliant and rarely gifted persons I had ever met. Again and again I found myself hanging breathlessly upon his words, and drew myself away with an angry jerk. No pleasure was complete for the company, unless he were there to direct and enjoy. He seemed to have possessed himself of a magic spell to draw all thoughts to him, and command all the adulation he desired. Only Eveline Eaton shrank away from his bewitching presence with a shiver of horror. I could see that she grew pale and weary-looking. The suspense of the fate of her brilliant hopes wore upon her. Squire Ned had gone up to Liverpool to see the woman, Nancy Lermont, and until his return we were to keep utter silence. I did not obtain any opportunity to speak with her without drawing the attention of the others, which at present I had no desire to do, for the constant whirl of festivities kept me in the society of the guests, and now Eveline no longer joined the parties away from the house. I was extremely annoyed at the circumstance, and managed one morning to beg her to go with a boating excursion, to please me. She smiled rather sadly, and replied, —

"I shall go, certainly, if I am asked."

The look of pained perplexity on her face haunted me, when I was on the lake, in the midst of the light-hearted company, and perceived that Eveline was not there. So she had received no invitation. What could it mean? I seized the first opportunity which presented itself to ask Catharine Cathart if Miss Eaton was ill, that she had not joined the party?

There went a cold flash of anger across her blue eyes.

"What, the governess? Oh, well, we thought it time there should be some sort of a boundary set, when she grew too exorbitant in her demands," replied she, in a counterfeited tone of carelessness, through which I readily perceived the vindictive anger.

"You surprise me! I thought her one of the most unpretending, unassuming persons I had ever met," answered I, gravely.

"So does papa insist; so thought we all of us; but so it has not proved, by any means. One would think she might be satisfied with being made like one of us; but the young lady is ambitious and designing. She is one of the most arrant coquettes, I should think, that she has assailed so many susceptible hearts. Confess now, Mr. Romaine, that you are also one of the victims."

I could not restrain the indignation I felt.

"Indeed, Miss Catharine, there has been nothing of the sort. Some one must have prejudiced you against an unoffending young lady," I said, warmly.

She gave a short, artificial laugh.

"Still under the glamour? Well, I can't convince you as readily as I did Mr. Jourdain. He confessed to the singular power she could exert upon him."

"Mr. Jourdain? Humph! So it is he who has opened your eyes to this new discovery. I doubt not but that it was through his means you first came to imagine such a thing, Miss Catharine."

A brilliant red surged into her fair cheek; her blue eyes flashed angrily.

"I do not know the drift of such a remark, Mr. Romaine," said she, haughtily.

I saw that I had innocently wounded her pride, and I returned, eagerly, —

"I beg your pardon, Miss Catharine, if anything I have said offends you. It was certainly unintentional."

She looked a moment steadily into my face, and then said frankly, with a troubled smile, —

"I believe you; you are absolved." And walked away, still with a heightened color.

After this I was ready to agree with Eveline, that Miss Catharine had listened too eagerly to John Jourdain's fascinating words, and I understood better the grave, worn look on Eveline Eaton's face. The serpent had entered her Eden; her happy

relations with the family were disturbed by this evil whisper of John Jourdain's. I pictured to myself just how adroitly he had managed to play upon the high-spirited, haughty Catharine's interest in him, so that her jealous indignation was directed against the presumptuous governess.

Much as I sympathized with Eveline, I felt myself powerless to help her, for my relations as a guest in the house would scarcely admit of remonstrance. But an event soon occurred which gave me better opportunity to know the truth of the matter.

Some of the guests had taken their departure from the Terrace, and there was left now but a small and choice band. The cream of the cream, as Mr. Jourdain gayly remarked, while waving his hand to the departing guests.

"How we shall miss them!" exclaimed Madge, with a rather lugubrious face, as we returned slowly from the steps where we had followed to give farewell to the departures, and gathered together in the little parlor. "Only eight of us left, when we were glorious with more than a score. It's a pity people can't be everywhere at the same time."

"I am afraid some of us would be wofully *de trop*," said Mr. Jourdain, with one of his beaming glances. "Now, good people, you are not going to be allowed to fall into melancholy. I'm going to give you a pleasant day. Miss Catharine, may I order the horses for us all? Two barouches will answer nicely. We are going to ride in a new direction, and take a peep into a Bird's Nest."

"I know, O Mr. Jourdain, I know," cried Madge, clapping her hands, gleefully. "That will, indeed, be delightful."

"What do you know?" asked Catharine, in surprise at her sister's excitement.

"I know what the Bird's Nest is. Mr. Jourdain is going to take us to that dear, mysterious, fairy nook of his."

Catharine's face glowed likewise. She rang the bell herself with unusual eagerness.

Mr. Jourdain, smiling still, went up to her and said a few words which reached my ear, sitting, as I did, in the window-recess, close beside them.

"Miss Catharine, I promised little May to show her some time an automaton music-box of mine, too cumbersome to be porta-

ble. What if we have the little lady with us today? I suppose it will involve taking the governess, too, for I do believe I promised at the same time that she should be with May when the treasure was exhibited. But I like to keep my word. A broken promise is an ugly thing to be thrown into a person's teeth. Let me absolve myself this time. Your presence, surely, will be able to save me from harm."

He bowed as he said it, and fixed upon her a glance of bewildering splendor from those Jewish eyes. His voice, too, was rich with dreamy tenderness. Catharine Cathart's hand trembled when it was again laid upon the bell-rope, and I knew her heart was fluttering with blissful overflow of hope.

This explained to me why Eveline was again of the party. I fancied Mr. Jourdain would have cheerfully dispensed with my presence; but, at Colonel Cathart's rejoicings at my being able to have a glimpse of a tiny nook fit for Oberon, he could only bow and repeat that he should be very happy indeed to show the American gentleman an *English Humming-Bird's Nest*, which, though nothing astonishing, was yet unique in its way.

I was really exceedingly pleased with the idea. Aside from my curiosity, there were many motives to urge me to join them. I saw by Eveline's quiet face, when she made her appearance, leading the blithe little May, that she was not aware it was anything but a common ride.

We set forth without any delay, and all in excellent spirits. Catharine Cathart had so far departed from her accustomed stately calm, as to rival the hoydenish Madge in her gay sallies. The country through which we passed was that of an agricultural district, and once we crossed the main avenue of a populous village. Then the way wound along shady groves, cool green meadows, and fields of pasturage, and at the last seemed to be taking us into the heart of a dense wood. I looked up inquiringly into Colonel Cathart's face when the carriage which was leading the way turned into a smooth, grassy lane.

He smiled at my surprise, and answered the mute inquiry. "It's a Bird's Nest, you know, and they do not build in the public haunts. You must be prepared for something unique whatever emanation comes from Mr. Jourdain's brain."

Still wilder and uninhabited grew the way. The trees were lying here and there at the side of the road, felled by the heedless woodcutter, or smitten by the sharp stroke of lightning. Great thickets of vine and bramble overhung the path in untrimmed luxuriance. A flight of birds went whizzing and twittering away from the first intrusion, and I saw two timid rabbits leap desperately across a bank to gain the covert of the trees, while bright-eyed squirrels in pairs kept us company, skimming along the hedges in triumphant defiance of our more snail-like pace.

Then a little brooklet bubbled along beside us for some way, until suddenly, with a short curve, it swept away into a meadow, and left us to enter a charming grove.

And here, in a smooth, open space, against what seemed a mammoth rock, and a sheer, precipitous height, we came to a dead pause. I peered around eagerly, but could discover no sign of the house. Was it indeed a veritable bird's nest?

Blithe May sprang out of the carriage and ran to the spot where Mr. Jourdain, having just dismounted, was seating Catharine on the velvety turf.

"O Mr. Jourdain, is this all the house you have got? And where is the music-box?"

His musical laugh rang out richly.

"Why, in the tree, little one; there is the music-box. Hark!"

Sure enough, from the very topmost bough of a tall pine floated down the liquid melody of a thrush.

And then he passed on from one to another of the group, bidding each one welcome in such choice language, with such winning gracefulness of manner, the man seemed almost transformed into a demigod. Even I stared at him in dumb amazement, so royally beautiful did he look, so benignantly gracious, so superior to common clay was every look and gesture.

And yet I fancied I caught an instant's glimpse of the arch-fiend within, which had wrapped around itself so angelic a guise, when he bent over little May, kissing her gayly. Others saw only the caress to the child. I knew that he had spoken one swift, low sentence to the governess, by the pallor that settled upon her sweet face.

When all had alighted, the owner of the Bird's Nest produced an ivory whistle, and blew three shrill blasts upon it; whereupon

in a trice three men made their appearance, as it seemed from the very bowels of the earth, or from the hidden chambers of the great rock. They went at once to the carriages, and began to unharness the horses, and presently they led the prancing animals away through a path leading around the rock. I wondered if the dumb creatures queried as curiously as I what would be the termination of that path.

But no one was kept long in suspense. Gallantly offering an arm, one to Mrs. Cathart and the other to Catharine, John Jourdain led the way around the rock, and lol as if a genii answered his command, there before us nestled a perfect gem of a cottage, amidst the most exquisitely cultivated tiny garden and walks, in which neither a leaf, nor pebble, nor spear of grass seemed to have been placed out of symmetry. Everything was the very perfection of fastidious nicety, only on a Lilliputian scale. Nestled there in the hollow, secure from observation until one came directly upon it, it was indeed more like a bird's nest than anything else, and one could only think of its being the home of some such fairy-like, dainty, honey-fed creature as a humming-bird.

Scarcely anything of the walls could be seen, for the house was one bower of glossy vines, carefully trained to spread over the surface, but parting at the arched windows with a framework of some climbing plant, gorgeous with blossoming, whose roots were hid from sight beneath the green canopy, in hanging pots. The doorway was a graceful porch, with slender pinnacles on either side. We entered to the rippling melody of the wonderful music-box, and little May's eyes went eagerly around in search of it, but found only an egg-shell cage of gilded wire, in which was a small grayish-brown bird, which, rousing at the entrance of the guests, fluttered its wings and chattered in a clear, human-like voice, "Welcome, good friends! Good friends, welcome!"

"Oh, what is that? It is not a parrot," cried May.

"No, my child, but a little East-Indian traveler, who, after an infinite deal of pains, and some danger, crossed the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic, to make my Bird's Nest merry," answered the host.

He did not linger at the cage, which was swinging above some tall cactus blossoms,

growing from an alabaster urn, but led on his guests. Everything I saw impressed me still more profoundly with the remarkable genius and the exquisite taste of the man who was our host. I understood and admired the daring policy which, conscious that ordinary means would make no mark in a land of princely luxury and enormous landed estates, had chosen rather to indulge only in the rare and unique, on an infinitesimal scale, trusting to a faultless taste and vivid imagination to produce as favorable an impression as stately grandeur and imposing magnificence.

"There's many a titled lady and noble lord would give half his rent-roll to come here as a guest," whispered Colonel Cathart to me.

And I did not doubt the assertion.

We made a pause in a sylvan retreat; a room which was sufficiently large for a dozen people, but which would have been overcrowded with many more. One side was of wide, iron-sashed glass doors, which were left ajar, and revealed the brilliant and fragrant treasures beyond. The little oasis of bloom would have been absurd, a mere speck, in any one of the conservatories of the great houses in the shire, but here it was a bower for Titania to dream in. There was not a common or ungraceful plant, not a withered blossom or faded leaf or twisted stalk among them. They were not in coarse pots, but in milky white vases of quaint Etruscan shape, and ranged on bamboo shelves, whose supports were deftly carved caryatides. The brilliant blossoms drew our eyes first, but presently we were able to glance around the room in which we stood. It was as unlike other people's rooms as John Jourdain's fancy was more quaint and vivid than ordinary mortals'.

The floor was a mosaic pavement of black and white marble. The walls were pure white, with a lozenged border in dead gilding. Long, low divans in glossy white linen, generously cushioned, and tasseled with gold cord, were carelessly disposed around the room, straight through the centre of which ran a partition formed of orange-trees in pots, whose coarse texture was entirely concealed by trailing ferns and velvety moss. At each end of the room was a graceful fountain, a winged girl pouring the foamy shower over a laughing babe in the marble basin.

The ladies were ushered on one side the

orange screen, the gentlemen on the other. An attendant waited on the guests, removing wrappers; and before a large mirror, swinging in a standing frame, was ranged every needed toilet luxury. Presently we were all ready to be escorted to the drawing-room. Antoine, in full blaze of glory, swung open the door and bade us enter. If I attempt to describe the room I shall never succeed in giving the bewitching effect it had upon the eye. I will venture to affirm there was not another apartment like it this side the excavated splendors of Pompeii. It was evidently in remembrance of some glimpse of those buried saloons that light pillars ran around the long, narrow room, entwined with living blossoms, which drank sustenance from urn-like pots of alabaster placed at the base of each. Statues, pictures, gems of art were there, but sparsely scattered with studied care, to avoid heaviness and profusion. The pillars were dead-white marble, with narrow, gilded lattices for the trailing blossoms. It was observable that there were but three colors in the room. The walls were pale yellow, paneled with narrow gilt mouldings. The divans and chairs were cushioned with a brilliant purple cloth. The silken drapery of the windows was a heavy royal purple, made like a sunset cloud by a rippling overflow of misty white lace; and the flowers, lavished everywhere with a prodigal hand, were only milky-white, and varying shades, from the pale-tinted heliotrope, to the rich dark purple of the pansy. The carpet was a wonderful thing. I knew, before Colonel Cathart whispered me, that John Jourdain had designed and superintended it. The groundwork was white, and strewn with the most perfect representation of the pan-ies which adorned the vases, — not another spray or bud, — nothing but one bed of glowing, gleaming velvet pansies. The whole effect was sumptuous. I found myself involuntarily shrinking from stepping firmly, and dropping my voice in a sort of rapturous awe when I answered the wondering comments of my companions.

The host's gracious and playful vivacity presently dispersed the restraint which settled upon the party when first entering this imperial although comparatively tiny drawing-room.

He talked lightly and carelessly of his doll-establishment, his bachelor house-keeping, — yet I fancied I could read his

satisfaction at its impression upon his guests in every look and gesture.

In one end of the long apartment was a sort of bay-window, before which fell the foam-faced purple curtains. In due season the master of the house drew the cord, swept back the heavy silken folds, and received a burst of delighted surprise from the company. A magnificent piano was standing there, but it was the prospect beyond which had awakened the applause of his guests. The glass doors swung open upon a flight of steps, which led down to a dimpled lake, on which was rocking gayly a pair of sail-boats. Like everything else there, it had taken us by surprise. It was our first hint of the vicinity of the charming sheet of water.

John Jourdain, standing before the piano, struck up a spirited boating-song, and in less than half an hour from that time all the party was skimming over the lake in the pretty boats, the Swan and the Petrel.

On the return came the crowning marvel of all, — the rose-tinted, rose-laid, rose-dressed banquet-room, where again his close regard for blending colors allowed no unharmonious tint. The china was like a pellucid pearl, on which some fairy sprite had stamped a single flower, — one to a piece, but all of different blossoms, and executed in the highest style of art. The glasses were glowing ruby from Bohemia, or delicate crystals, frail enough to have been fashioned in sport by the Arctic gnome. A complete garland of roses encircled the table, and fruits of all sorts were piled into artistic groups, each in itself a picture. The very ices were moulded singly. Mr. Jourdain, with one of his sweetest smiles, brought to Catharine Cathart a tiny vase, holding a single white rose, which dissolved like a drop of nectar, the flower exquisitely delicious with one flavor, the vase equally attractive with another. At the same time Antoine brought to me a glass plate, with a morning-glory rising from a wee basket; and handed Colonel Cathart a pine-apple, perfectly representing the fruit in looks and taste, — as though it had been sleeping in the heart of an Arctic iceberg.

"Jourdain — Jourdain, you must have fathomed the secret of the passage to the North Pole!" said the colonel, gayly. "These are not ices, but genuine flowers, which grew once, either on Parnassus, or in Eden, and have been preserved ever

since in the grim hiding-place of the Ice King."

"Oh! I don't keep such an establishment as yours. Where one has an egg-shell like this he must look after things himself. I took a fancy one day to have the moulds made. I am glad if they please you," he replied.

It was at this refreshment-room I first noticed a singular expression on Eveline Eaton's face. I could not fathom it. It seemed like a blending of hope and fear, resolution and uncertainty. I was surprised to see that she voluntarily sought out the host, and spoke some few words to him, with an eagerness that astonished me, and actually with a smile on her lips. It seemed some request, for, with a bow and smile, he called Antoine, spoke a few brief words to him, and the latter led the way from the apartment, Miss Eaton following. I think some of the others noticed this little circumstance, for Miss Catharine shrugged her white shoulders, and then whispered to her mother.

CHAPTER V.

Meantime the company returned to the drawing-room, or wandered with pleased curiosity over the whole place. There were eight rooms in the house, but each one was a marvel in itself. I should say all but one. There was one door carefully locked, into which I had seen no one enter. Madge Cathart had tried the door twice, and, finding it did not yield, she said, with one of her arch nods, looking straight into the host's face, —

"Ah! here is the skeleton or the Blue-beard chamber."

Just the faintest shade of annoyance crossed John Jourdain's face; but he laughed merrily as he replied, —

"Yes, that is the Ogre's den. Don't presume to ask an entrance; for you know the fate of all unwary maidens who cross such a threshold. I assure you Sister Annie and her timely relief would be absent in this case."

Madge, evidently extremely curious, still lingered by the mysterious door; but it was quite evident Mr. Jourdain had no mind to gratify idle speculation, for he walked away and joined the group in the garden. Mrs. Cathart gave a sharp reprimand to her wild little daughter, but Madge only answered, with a comic grimace, —

"Nonsense, my lady mamma! You are every one dying of curiosity as well as myself. It is only that I am more free-spoken. John Jourdain is more than ever an enigma, — a sphinx in a bird's nest!"

I left Mrs. Cathart still remonstrating, and went by myself around the house. There was so little of it, nothing could be lost or concealed except in that one closed room. Where then was Eveline Eaton? She was certainly nowhere to be found. I found the child May hunting everywhere for her, and took the little lady into my charge, beguiling her impatience for her friend by showing off to her the fairy wonders of the cabinets and aquarium.

Presently it was declared time to start for the Terrace without delay. Colonel Cathart announced that the carriages were already waiting on the other side of the great rock, which separated this little Eden from the wilds of the woods.

We were somewhat hurried by the declaration that a thunder-cloud was rising, and each one hastened to follow the colonel's impatient steps toward the carriages. I tied little May's hat, and fastened on her cape, with my own hands, and lingered and lingered, under every pretext I could muster, dreading to call the attention of the family to Miss Eaton's unaccountable absence.

Just as all possible hope of doing this vanished, I saw Antoine go to that door, and heard him say, hastily, —

"Mademoiselle, your friends are all going. How will you obtain permission to remain longer?"

I heard the click of the key in the lock, and then the door slowly unclosed, and Eveline came out. She passed along the corridor hastily, without noticing me, and spoke quickly, in an agitated voice, —

"It does not matter. I have gone too far now. I must stay. I will remain at all costs."

I felt my heart sink within me; and, hushing May's eager explanation, followed to the carriages.

"There you are at last! Hurry! there is no time to lose!" said the colonel, impatiently.

I sprang into my place, holding May in my lap; but Miss Eaton, advancing to Mrs. Cathart, said, in a stifled, husky voice, while her face was rapidly paling and flushing, —

"If you please, I must remain a little longer. I have lost something which it is imperative that I should find. I have an acquaintance at the next village. I will walk thither, and spend the night, and find means to reach the Terrace in the morning."

Mrs. Cathart looked astonished, embarrassed, and a little pained.

"But it is very unusual, very strange," stammered she; "it will look so unbecoming!"

"I beg you will not keep us waiting, Mrs. Cathart," said her husband again, fidgeting on his seat. "The affair is entirely Miss Eaton's, whatever comes of it. Where is Jourdain?"

"Oh!" said Miss Catharine, with a spiteful laugh, "he announced his intention of remaining here over night at the supper-table. Miss Eaton heard it, and probably based her manoeuvres therefrom. I must admit that it is the most scandalous proceeding! But drive on, — pray drive on."

Eveline Eaton did not hear this remark, for she had darted back to the house. And now John Jourdain appeared, waving his adieux. We drove around through the woods at a brisk trot, and no one was disposed to be talkative in the colonel's carriage, where I had taken the place left vacant by the governess. I myself was in a maze of perplexity and agitated thoughts. Of one thing I was now convinced: however I might try to impose upon Squire Ned, I could not cheat my own conscience. I had learned to love Eveline Eaton in this brief time as a man loves a woman but once. I writhed in torture, reflecting upon this singular conduct, so unlike her usual delicate reserve, her stern avoidance of the arch tempter. Had she yielded at last to this most brilliant and seductive character of all, the host of Bird's Nest? Amidst all this luxury, had her troubled future risen up in gloomy contrast and beguiled her into forgetting herself?

"Well," said Catharine Cathart, breaking a long silence with her sharp, acrid tone, "you certainly will not receive that girl back again as May's governess?"

"I will wait until circumstances are explained. If she can prove that she really remained to find a lost trinket, or if I have good evidence of her leaving the house before nightfall, I shall feel inclined to overlook her indiscretion. If there is no good

explanation, I shall certainly refuse to receive her again into my family," replied Mrs. Cathart, in a mild though somewhat anxious voice.

"Leave the house — pshaw! of course she will not. I should not be surprised if she remained there eventually, and you saw no more of her. Shameless creature!" murmured Catharine, in a fierce whisper.

Her mother laid a warning touch on her shoulder. I drew little May closer in my arms, and tried to seem absorbed with the surrounding scenery; but my heart was heavy enough, — all in a whirl of conflicting thoughts and emotions. But when we entered the village lying adjacent to the woodland stretch owned by Mr. Jourdain, I had come to a resolution.

"Colonel Cathart," said I, in a tone which showed there was to be no appeal from my decision, "I admired this little village exceedingly when we drove through this morning. I should like to spend the night at the inn yonder. You will see me again some time tomorrow. Undoubtedly plenty of vehicles are to be found in which I can return to the Terrace."

Miss Catharine glanced into my face with a rather satirical smile, and her father looked as if he thought I had taken leave of my senses; but I rose up from my seat as I spoke and leaped lightly to the ground. Waving my hand gayly, I watched the carriage disappear from sight. I walked straight down the broad, white road, till I found a shop, where I judged it possible I might find firearms offered for sale. In a brief time I had secured a small pocket-pistol, and was flying rather than walking back again through the wooded lane leading toward the Bird's Nest. Once I heard voices and heavy steps, and precipitously darted into the bushes. My cautious but close scrutiny showed to me Antoine, with two of the maids, who were evidently accepting his escort to the village. They were talking and laughing merrily.

"He has sent them away," muttered I, fiercely; and I left my retreat and dashed on when the group was safely around the turn of the lane. "But I shall be there if there is need of help."

The evening shadows were now swiftly descending, and there, in the shade of the blending tree-tops, they made an almost instantaneous night. But the path was too well trodden for me to lose the way; and at

length, with one gasp of intense relief, I found myself at the open clearing, where we had dismounted from the carriage. I trod slowly and cautiously, grateful to the obscuring thunder-cloud, which gave me dense darkness in which to grope my way to the house without detection. I had only a confused plan in my mind. The absence of Antoine and the maids lessened the danger of my presence being discovered, and I crept at once to the long, low windows in front and listened. All was still, and the room unlighted. So they were not in the drawing-room. Accordingly I made my way to the side-room, where we had removed our wrappers. That too was dark and silent; and the supper-room was likewise empty.

"The Bluebeard chamber then," thought I. "But how shall I enter it even were I needed there?"

The pale, fitful glimmer of distant lightning showed me the house every few minutes. With all my faculties sharpened by intense anxiety and excitement, I began to calculate how that room must be situated in reference to the windows on the outside. The next lightning-flash came with weird effect, showing, as from a magic lantern, the pretty picture of the pinnaced cottage, in its embowering green, and then shutting down again into deeper blackness. But I had seen, above a sort of porch, on the side toward the lake, a broad, arched window, out of line with any of the others. And after the lightning vanished, a faint glow broke over it, flickering at first, but soon shining out with steady luster. I stood a moment, trying to steady my loudly beating heart. I knew that my purpose would seem ridiculous folly, if not downright meanness, were I detected by any of the inmates; but I was nerved by a desperate determination. Eveline Eaton should not remain that night at John Jourdain's house if any means of mine could hinder it; and somehow I felt a growing conviction that she needed and sought my assistance.

Fortunately I was a light, athletic fellow. I crept slowly along to the porch, and swung myself from the small pillar to the cap of the porch; and from there I could walk securely on the stout trellis, which ran around the whole house for the support of the heavy creeping vines. A low shriek floating up to me changed my vague uncertainty of movement into an eager determined pur-

pose. I went forward hastily, although noiselessly, and gained the window. It was partly raised, and I could look down into the room below; for, singularly, this window—the sole means of air and light to that truly mysterious apartment—was placed at the very top of the wall, quite out of reach of those in the room.

Kneeling on the trellis, clinging with one arm to the window-sash, I looked down. A Bluebeard chamber truly. What singular taste, or what necessary precaution, had cushioned the four walls on every side, as high up as the tallest man could reach? Why was it so simply furnished? with no wooden furniture whatever,—only soft rugs, and luxurious cushions for seats,—not even a bookcase or table; even the very lamp secured to the wall, and higher than John Jourdain's head, as he stood there below me, an evil, triumphant glitter in his black eyes, a spot of burning crimson on either transparent cheek. These queries rushed through my mind with stinging intensity, even while I sought feverishly for Eveline Eaton. There she stood, facing John Jourdain haughtily, but with no crimson on her face. She was in deadly terror, I could plainly perceive, but was forcing herself to seem calm.

"Once again I demand for you to give me the key, and let me go from this room!" said she, resolutely holding her voice from quivering.

His insolent laugh floated up to me, and made me set my teeth in rage.

"What! turn away my guest who has honored me by giving up the attractions of Eglantine Terrace for my sake? You must think me rude and stupid both!"

"Unlock the door, and let me go!"

"Pretty dear, I never knew how brilliantly your eyes could flash before! I like a woman of spirit. You improve wonderfully on acquaintance, fairest Eveline!"

Her voice was hoarse with indignant pride.

"For shame, John Jourdain! Where is your manliness? How dare you insult me so? Once again I ask you will you unlock that door, and give me free passage from this house? I warn you I will scream again for help if I am not speedily released from this room."

"Your voice will be likely to reach the thrushes in the tree-tops, and may be get an answer from some listening owl. What

else do you think can hear from this house in the midst of the woods?"

"The servants are surely human beings?" gasped she.

"My dear young lady, there is not another living being in this house but yourself and your humble servant. Antoine and the gossiping maids have gone over to the village, laughing and chattering over the plainness with which a certain governess makes known her *penchant* for the master of the Bird's Nest. Very light work will they make of your name, Miss Eveline, for servants are arrant gossipers. But a word from me can check them. I do not promise it will be so easy to smooth matters at the Terrace. I don't think you can be received there again."

"What do you mean? How dare you stain my ears with such vile insinuations? I shall go back to the Terrace tomorrow, unless—unless you add another to your present crimes, and murder me here in cold blood."

Her voice was unnaturally hoarse, but she still maintained her proud, stern demeanor.

"I don't want to murder: I desire to marry you, fairest Eveline," returned he, with a mocking laugh.

"One is as welcome as the other," she answered, impassionately. "Let me go! Help! Oh! help!"

Her voice rang out wildly, and it sent the blood curdling through my veins. I drew out my pistol, and, holding it with one hand, for a moment desperately resolved to kill him. An instant's reflection, however, showed me that the time had not yet come for so desperate a measure. But it was trying enough to allow her to be ignorant of my presence.

"Let us end this folly," said he, in a sharp, abrupt voice. "Sit down, Miss Eaton, and discuss this matter coolly. I am positive I can convince you of the folly of resisting my will, the good sense of my proposition. I desire to marry you"—

"To make sure of the Millingford estate," retorted Eveline, with bitter scorn; "not for love of me."

He gave a little start, but answered, coolly,—

"I suspected something was in the wind. You prove to me the wisdom of this prompt movement. Whatever may be my motive, it does not alter the bearing of the case;

though I swear to you I like you better than I thought it possible for me to care for any woman. Supposing you are the heiress of that estate, — which, mark me, I have not yet admitted, — you can never obtain it without every legal proof to substantiate your claim. Pardon me, if I question your ability to furnish anything at all satisfactory. If you persist in making me an enemy I shall certainly contest the matter faithfully. Well, how are you then? Back again from your golden dreams, to find the dependent, wearisome life of a governess more than ever intolerable."

"It would be a thousand times more delightful than living at Millingford Reach, in a queen's grandeur, with you for my husband. I have been happy and contented at Eglantine Terrace always, until your persecutions began," interrupted Eveline, indignantly.

"Ah! but matters are changed now. Are you simple enough not to see that this night will change your relations to the Catharts?"

"What do you mean?" demanded she, hotly.

"I mean that your friends have returned to the Terrace shocked and indignant at the loss of character in the girl who, of her own free will, managed to be left alone to spend the night at the secluded home of a bachelor."

"Villain! traducer! How dare you?" she shrieked, womanly anger and pride flashing from her eyes.

"It is true. Look at the appearances of the affair. It was your voluntary action. You remained on a false pretext. You had lost something. Have you found it yet? You agreed to go to the village to spend the night with a friend. You will not make your appearance there at all. My servants will testify that you were here, in this room with me, through the livelong night. Do you fancy you can obtain a governess's situation at the Terrace, or anywhere else, after this?"

She had buried her face in her hands, and was weeping tears of bitterness and shame.

"Monster! fiend! I see now the trap into which I have fallen. Oh! is there no mercy in your heart? no pity for a motherless, friendless girl?"

"A great deal, Eveline Eaton, if you grant my wishes, — pity and care and tenderness. You shall be the envied and honored mistress of Millingford Reach. You

shall tread royally in velvet and lace, and rule servants and governesses of your own; and I swear to you you shall find in me a true and tender husband. All this if you promise to marry me" —

"And if I will not?" demanded Eveline, hoarsely.

His voice deepened into vindictive fierceness.

"You shall go forth from hence blighted, dishonored, and condemned by every virtuous person."

"It need not be. I have still friends. I will tell my story. I can prove my innocence. There are those brave and generous, able to help, who will right me."

"You mean the Yankee engineer?" sneered he. "Do you think he will refuse the evidence of his own observation? Or, if he was fool enough to believe you, could he produce proofs either of your innocence or your legitimate claim as Ada Derne's daughter? I tell you, girl, you have not learned me yet. No obstacle ever stands in my path long, no plan of mine ever miscarries; and the facts here are inexorable. There's no choice but between utter ruin and at least an envied and brilliant position."

Eveline had been standing before him, her beautiful face rigid with horror and despair. Never have I looked upon a countenance so full of utter loathing and profound scorn as that she turned slowly upon him, while she said, in a hoarse but resolute voice, —

"Then I choose ruin, shame, poverty, — in the eyes of the world; but, as your wife, I should be stained and dishonored in the sight of Heaven."

"Fool!" exclaimed he, passionately, "you provoke your own danger. I tell you there is a devil in me that will stop at no limit when once aroused. Take thought for yourself. I swear I could murder you here this night."

"And bring your own neck to the halter," returned she, courage and strength seeming to come from sheer desperation. "Do you think there is no one to look up my unaccountable absence? There is Squire Dingley, who will speedily call you to account."

"Am I a simpleton?" demanded he, coolly. "Were it not the easiest thing in the world to give my evidence and Antoine's that you left this house some time in the

course of the day that is coming? Was not your staying a voluntary thing? Who will care to make inquiries for a girl whose character is gone, even if the body be found distorted, and only recognizable by the clothing, dragged out from the lake by some careless fisherman?"

Eveline shuddered from head to foot. He suddenly changed his behaviour, — dropped, as he would have thrown off a mask, his horribly vindictive evil look, and called up the darkly fascinating smile he wore in company.

"Eveline, perverse child, let this end. Accept the fate held out to you. Go with me to a clergyman now, and tomorrow morning I will take you in triumph to the Terrace, and proudly introduce you as my wife. You know there are plenty who will envy you, — those who have looked down upon you. The governess in turn may triumph over them. Say that you accept the inevitable fate before you cheerfully."

"Never — never!" gasped Eveline, with another gesture of intense abhorrence. "It is not inevitable; only one thing in human life is inevitable, and that is death. I will accept death cheerfully in preference to the hateful life you offer me."

A terrible fit of passion seized him. He turned purple in the face, and then to such a livid, deadly pallor as might well appall and alarm the defenceless girl before him. His eyes blazed like coals of fire; the foam-flecks rose to his lips; he was more like a maniac than a rational being as he sprang toward her and seized her by the arm, and drew before her eyes a shining, treacherous blade, which looked like a fiery dart of fate as the bright light flickered and flashed over its polished surface.

I cautiously lowered my pistol, and covered his temple; my finger was already on the trigger; another half instant, and that fiery soul had been launched upon eternity, or the deadly weapon had failed of its trustiness, when a low, horrified exclamation from Eveline stayed my hand.

I bent closer to the window. What did it mean? He stood before her still, one hand extended as its clutched fingers grasped her shoulder; but the girl had slipped away, and stood looking at him in wild amazement and awe, and yet evidently with unutterable thanksgiving.

There he still stood, while she crept toward the door. A statue of ice could not

have been more rigid and stirless, more unconscious and powerless to prevent her escape. The glassy, upturned eyes spell-bound by an icy breath, the rigid, outstretched arm, the whole iron attitude and expression, flashed upon me a ray of light.

"It is explained now," thought I. "The mysterious calls away, the close attendance of Antoine, the singularly furnished and cushioned chamber, the irritable rejection of all surmises of delicate health. John Jourdain's secret is out, the mystery of the Bluebeard chamber solved. He is a cataleptic, — possibly also affected with epileptic seizures on recovery from the trance, as the cushioned walls would imply."

While I peered down in vague awe, Eveline was trying the door. She came back to the stiff figure, hesitated a moment, then, with a strong shudder, thrust her fingers into the pocket of the light gray sacque he wore, found the key, opened the door, and vanished from my sight. I drew one long, shuddering breath, and began to descend from my perch. While I was slipping down the pillar I came to a decision. Eveline should not know that I was near. I would walk close enough in her track to protect her, but her troubles should be no further increased or compromised by my company. I heard her light steps on the graveled walk, saw her white dress flitting through the shrubbery, and cautiously followed.

Fortunately the thunder-cloud had been borne far down to the eastward by the strong breeze, and the sky overhead was once more clear, and brilliant with stars. The white dress was my guide, and I followed it with steady persistence, though scarcely able to keep pace with her flying feet. She gave herself no pause until she was out of the woodland lane upon the broad highway. There were no houses for something like half a mile, but across the green fields the lights of the village twinkled cheerily. The very sight seemed to give her courage and strength. She leaned a moment against a tree, then pursued her way steadily. As resolutely and steadily I followed, treading carefully, that the echo of my footsteps might not alarm her.

She seemed bewildered as she entered the village, and looked around her doubtfully. Then, after a moment's hesitation, she approached a woman who was hurrying along with a market-basket on her arm, and inquired wistfully, —

"Can you tell me where Miss Laura Morton lives? She is Judge Morton's daughter."

"Faith, and is it the likes o' me to know about the grand folks? Go over to the tavern, and they'll know about it."

She pointed to the rustic inn, whose swinging sign creaked beneath the giant branches of a mammoth elm; and Eveline, with faltering and evidently reluctant steps, turned toward it. I was sorely tempted to spring to her side and give her the encouragement and protection of my presence; but a second thought deterred me, and I only followed on in silence. She walked up to the inn porch timidly, and looked around, as if searching for a female face. But there was only a group of noisy plowmen, and a knot of eager talkers around the host. I made my way circuitously toward the latter, and, while Eveline still stood wavering, I touched his arm.

"There's a lady out there waiting to see you, landlord. I heard her inquiring the way to Judge Morton's, and they sent her here to get the right direction. Send one of your maids with her, she seems so frightened, and charge it into my bill; for I'm to stay with you tonight. Take a good look at her face, and tell me what it's like."

He nodded good-humoredly, and went down the steps, spoke a few words to Eve-

line, and came back, escorting her to the little waiting-room; while he summoned a maid-servant to accompany her to the designated residence of Miss Morton, who was, as I afterward learned, a schoolmate who had been very kind to her.

When she had gone, I carelessly inquired if he should know the lady if he saw her again.

"Bless your heart! yes, indeed. It's a lady's face, sure enough; but she looks as if she'd seen trouble."

I took out my watch, ostensibly to compare it with the great square-faced clock sitting in the corner of the tap-room.

"Only half-past nine. Look here, landlord: that's the hour I arrive, and that's the very time I want you to send me off to Eglantine Terracé. You won't forget the hour. So let me have some of your best cigars: it's so early in the evening, I can smoke several before retiring."

The rosy-cheeked Boniface bustled into his bar, and returned with two boxes of fragrant cigars for my choice. And, puffing languidly, with the aromatic clouds floating around me, I leaned back on the settee at the inn door, revolving the exciting events of the day, and congratulating myself that I had followed out my singular impression that I was needed at John Jourdain's Bird's Nest.

THE HEIRESS AND HER GUARDIAN.

A TALE OF ENGLISH COUNTRY LIFE.

BY MRS. H. LOVETT CAMERON.

[This Story was commenced in the November Number of the Magazine.]

CHAPTER VII.

MR. BRUCE'S LETTER.

"You will let me sit here and write a letter, wont you, Colonel Fleming?" said Mrs. Blair, when Juliet, on her inopportune entrance, had effected a hasty retreat from the room.

Of course Colonel Fleming was delighted to have Mrs. Blair's company. From his using it so much, the room had come to be looked upon as essentially his.

The lady sat down, dipped her pen in the ink, and began to write. Now and then she glanced at her companion, who, with a perfectly impassive face, sat apparently absorbed in the "Saturday Review."

It was not a very long letter, but the composition of it seemed to afford her a good deal of trouble, for she laid down her pen and pondered several times.

"You must be *very* urgent," she wrote, "for I fear Juliet is inclined to be headstrong, and to throw herself away in an entirely new and *most undeserving* quarter; it would be a dreadful mistake—and with such a property. The responsibility rests almost entirely on yourself." And then she signed her name and put up the letter in a faint-scented gray-tinted envelop, which she sealed and addressed to "Josiah Bruce, Esq., 199 Austin Friars, City," with an underlined *Private* in large letters in the left-hand corner.

It was astonishing how affectionately devoted Mrs. Blair was to her stepdaughter all that day. She hardly let her out of her sight; she was untiring in her efforts to amuse and entertain her; she offered to wind her wools, to play her accompaniments, to go out driving with her, and even to help her with her visits in the village.

Juliet was in such a strange exalted state of mind, that she was scarcely conscious of these unwonted attentions; but when the evening came, she found that she had not spoken a single word to her guardian since the morning.

When they went up stairs to bed, Mrs. Blair did a most unusual thing; she followed Juliet into her bedroom.

"Juliet, love, I have something to say to you; I fear, something you wont like—something disagreeable."

"One seldom does like disagreeable things, my dear Mrs. Blair. What is it that you are going to tell me?"

"Well, dear, it is about yourself. You don't generally like my advice even when it is best meant, I know; but still—"

"I am afraid I am not very amenable to advice," said the girl, with a momentary softening towards the woman whose false-ness she always instinctively fathomed with the clear-sightedness of a perfectly candid and sincere nature; "you know I have had my own way so much; but I shall really be glad to listen to any advice you can give me."

"Well, love, it is about Colonel Fleming and yourself."

"What do you mean?" In an instant she was like a creature at bay, turning on her stepmother with flashing eyes.

"Don't get angry, Juliet; but do you think it is *quite* wise or prudent to sit so much alone in the library with Colonel Fleming in the morning? Of course you and I know what nonsense such a thing must be; but people are so stupid, and it gives rise to talk."

"People! what people? and who talks?"

"Why, things are said in the house—in the servants' hall."

"How *dare* they?" cried Juliet, frantically.

"Yes, of course, love, it is most impertinent; but you see servants notice things just like any one else," said Mrs. Blair, deprecatingly.

"And how can you lower yourself to listen to tittle-tattle from the servants' hall, Mrs. Blair!"

"Hush, hush, my dear, don't scold at me; I never listen, never; as I always tell Ernestine, 'don't bring things to me.'"

"I hate that Ernestine!" broke in the girl, passionately.

"Ernestine is a very valuable servant, and I don't intend to part with her," said Mrs. Blair, with a touch of temper, which, however, was instantly suppressed; "but, my love, that is not the point; as I was saying, they *will* talk, and isn't it a pity to give occasion for such talk? Of course, you and I know how absurd it is, quite ridiculous, in fact; a man such years older than yourself, so grave and serious, and your guardian, too; something almost improper in the idea, isn't there? and you half engaged to Cis Travers, too!"

"Be good enough to leave Cis Travers's name out of the question, Mrs. Blair," said Juliet, by this time fairly stamping with fury. "I consider myself quite incapable of doing anything that is unseemly or unfitting to my position in this house, and I shall certainly not alter my conduct for any impertinent remarks which may be made upon it by your maid!"

"Well, dearest, don't be so angry about it; I am sure I only meant to give you a *motherly hint*, and you must not bear me a grudge for it, will you, darling?"

"Thank you; I dare say you thought it was your duty," said Juliet, coldly; at which Mrs. Blair declared that she was a sweet, dear, warm-hearted, generous-souled darling, flung her arms round her, and kissed her almost with rapture, Juliet submitting to the operation with a bad grace.

But afterwards the shot told, as Mrs. Blair, who understood her victim, probably knew that it would. For Juliet breakfasted in her own room the next morning, and then, it being a bright fine day, went straight out to the home farm and the village, and to call on the clergyman's wife, and did not come in till the luncheon bell was ringing. As she entered, she met Colonel Fleming in the hall.

"Why, where have you been hiding yourself all the morning?" he said, as he went forward to greet her.

"I have been out; I had to go into the village and to the farm."

"You mustn't do that again. I can't spare you; I have wanted you all the morning," he said, with a ring in his voice that sent a thrill of delight to her heart.

And then Mrs. Blair came sailing down upon them from above, and they all three went in to luncheon.

Juliet decided that she would not punish herself so foolishly another day; she would go into the library as usual the next morning.

But the next morning, fate, in the shape of a letter in a blue envelop that lay by Colonel Fleming's plate at breakfast time, intervened.

The letter ran thus:

"DEAR SIR,—I very much wish you would run up to town for a few days; to begin with, I should like you to meet Davidson about the sale of those small Dorsetshire farms, as we could settle it all so much better in a personal interview with him. I also much wish to have some talk with you about another matter that is most seriously on my conscience, namely, the Travers alliance. I have had a visit from young Mr. Travers himself, who has been good enough to honour me with his confidence; and I have also received a letter from his father on the same subject, and I think that you and I, my dear sir, shall be wanting in our duty to Miss Blair, and in our due regard for the maintenance of her very fine property, if we *do not do our utmost to carry out her late father's wishes on this most important point.* I am, sir, yours faithfully,

"JOSIAH BRUCE."

Colonel Fleming read this letter over twice most carefully, and then laid it down by the side of his plate and went on with his breakfast in absolute silence.

"Can I have the dog-cart to take me to the station this morning to meet the 12.30 train, Juliet?" he asked, after some minutes.

"Certainly; but why?"

"I find I must go up to town to-day."

"Then I will drive you to the station in my pony carriage; that will be much pleasanter, don't you think so?"

"No doubt, fair hostess; but I fear it is not possible, as I must take my portmanteau."

"Your portmanteau! Why, I thought you meant for the day! For how long are you going?" said Juliet, laying down her knife and fork.

"I must be away a few days, perhaps a week," he answered, not looking at her and speaking rather rapidly.

"A week!" she repeated, with a dull dismay in her voice.

"Yes, I have a good many things I ought to begin to see to. Time slips away so

rapidly, and my leave will not last forever; and now Mr. Bruce writes that he wants me to see about—about the Dorsetshire farms you have settled to sell. Yes, I think it will take me about a week. If you will kindly excuse me, I will go and see after putting up my things." He spoke rather nervously, and rose to leave the room.

"O, let Higgs see to all that," said Juliet, impatiently.

"Thanks; I will go and speak to him;" and he went.

Juliet sat still in a sort of stupor. A week! what an endless blank of days it seemed! what a sudden break in her fool's paradise! What could take him away from her like that for a whole week, with so much that was unspoken between them, and that last question that he had asked her still unanswered?

Almost before she had realized that he was going, she heard the sound of the wheels of the dog-cart driving up to the door, and she met the footman carrying down his hat-box and portmanteau, and he himself in stiff London clothes and a tall hat, following the man down stairs.

"Must you really be off?"

Poor child! A far less accurate observer of human character than was Hugh Fleming could hardly have failed to trace the despondency in her face and voice as she spoke.

"I must really, I am afraid; unless I want to lose my train," he answered, smiling; "but I shall come back, Juliet, certainly in a week, perhaps sooner; I shall come back."

"You are sure?" she asked, almost entreatingly; and he answered, very gravely:

"Yes, in any case I shall come back."

And then he jumped into the dog-cart, gathered up the reins, lifted his hat to her, and drove off; whilst she stood leaning against the open doorway, watching till he was out of sight. A tall graceful figure, clad in soft brown velvet, with large wistful dark eyes that seemed almost as if they might be full of tears as they looked after him.

Did he think, I wonder, as he looked back at her, of that other girl in her white dress, who had so stood under a honey-suckle archway on a midsummer's evening, twenty years ago?

Not much, I fancy.

How desolate and dull the house seemed

to Juliet as she turned back into it again after he was gone! She wandered about aimlessly, not knowing what to do with herself. At last she went into the library, where everything reminded her of him.

His books, some of his papers, and his writing things lay scattered on the table where he was accustomed to sit; she fingered them lovingly one after the other, and then began to put them together, smoothing out the papers and putting them in order with a touch that was lingering and reverent, as if they had been relics.

Presently she caught sight of the portfolio of his drawings leaning up against the wall. She sat down on the floor in front of it, and began turning over the sketches eagerly until she found again the little crayon head she had first so ruthlessly torn and then so laboriously mended. Leaning her head on her hand and holding it out before her, Juliet Blair gazed long and intently at it.

Poor, pale, sweet face! now that she knew its story, how full of touching meaning were the blue eyes and the little timid mouth!

Poor little bride, dead on her wedding morning! was ever story so pitiful, so heart-rending as hers!

And yet her living rival, with her rich warm coloring and glorious eyes, with twice her beauty and ten times her talent, sat staring at the faint pale face with all the passion of unreasoning jealousy raging at her heart.

This was the girl who had possessed his first, his best affections, who was his ideal, his religion in woman, who had won from him that intense devotion of his early manhood which can never in any man be exactly reproduced again!

Was she unfortunate? was she poor? Nay, rather, most fortunate, most blessed, most rich Annie Chalmers, to have known how to win his whole heart, to have possessed the first love of such a man as Hugh Fleming, even if with her life she had paid the forfeit of such intense, such unspeakable joy!

For, what was left to her—to Juliet Blair? Nothing but the wreck of a heart that had scarcely even now recovered that early shock; the fragments of a life that was broken up and spoilt; the tangled thread that might never possibly be entirely made straight again. And was she sure even of this? Alas! no.

I do not think that, from what you have seen of my Juliet, you will misunderstand her when I tell you that there was little pity, little compassion in her heart towards that poor dead girl, whose story nevertheless had affected her in the telling; but only a great envy and a great bitterness of soul.

Meanwhile Colonel Hugh Fleming was leaning back in a first-class smoking carriage of the Great Western Railway with a cigar in his mouth, going through a course of the most unpleasant self-examinations.

Was he a blackguard? he asked himself, angrily; had he no sense of honor left, that he must go and stay in a girl's house as her guardian, and then try to steal her heart as a lover?

She with all her money, and he with nothing save his Indian appointment! What had he been doing? what had he been thinking about? Over what precipice had his selfishness well nigh hurried him when Mr. Bruce's timely reminder had recalled him suddenly to his senses? Good heavens! was this honor? was this conscientiousness? was this fulfilling the responsibility her father had delegated to him? What opprobrious names would there not be rightly cast at him by everybody belonging to her, were he to do this mean base deed, and take advantage of his position with her to gain possession of her wealth!

Ah! but the child was learning to love him! could he not read it in those dark eyes that could hardly meet his, in her burning cheeks and trembling lips, and still more in all the little flashes of temper and jealousy that betrayed her secret to him a hundred times a day? Only learning as yet, he trusted; she would unlearn the lesson soon enough if he showed her how; her pride, her spirit would carry her through it. Alas! why was she not poor like himself? why was she clogged with all these riches? O God! but it was hard to have such happiness once more within his reach, and this time to have to push it away from him with his own hands!

When he got to town he put himself into a hansom and went straight down to Austin Friars.

Mr. Bruce was in, and delighted to see him.

He plunged at once into all the advantages of the "alliance," as he would call it. It would be the making of the property; just what was always wanted to render it

the finest and most valuable in the county. The families had always been friendly, and her father had set his heart on it; he had at least a dozen letters from old Mr. Blair by him now on this subject; he would show them to Colonel Fleming if he liked.

Colonel Fleming would waive that; he was quite ready to take Mr. Bruce's word for it; but what, might he ask—what did Mr. Bruce imagine that he could do in the matter?

"Why, urge it upon her, my dear sir, urge it upon her."

"I—what can I say? Surely you are the person—"

"Not a bit of it, colonel; not a bit of it. She doesn't mind me more than an old woman. Now, she has the greatest respect and reverence for you, I know very well; and affection too, I think."

"Yes, yes, very likely," interrupted Hugh, hurriedly; "still I cannot see that anything I can say will make any difference to her."

"You have great influence with her, I am sure you have; and besides you are the person to speak; it will come with authority from you. It is clearly your duty, Colonel Fleming, if you will excuse my saying so."

"Of course, of course, Bruce; say no more about it; but Miss Blair is not docile."

"Not at all, sir, not at all; and that reminds me. Do you know of any low attachment she is likely to have formed lately?" asks Mr. Bruce, quite unconscious that the "undesirable person" alluded to in Mr. Blair's letter, which by the way he carefully kept dark, was no other than Colonel Fleming himself.

"Low attachment!" repeated that gentleman, in amazement; "certainly not; I never heard of such a thing, and should think it quite impossible; what can you have heard?"

"Ah, well, I certainly did not think much of it myself, but rumors are always getting about, and will as long as she is unmarried; the girl should have a husband—nothing will really be right on the place till she is married."

"Still," objected the colonel, "I do not see that you can force her into marrying against her will."

"Certainly not; but young women, my dear sir, as you and I know well, are very easy to influence. A few judicious words

about duty and responsibility, and so forth, and they come round as nicely as possible; they only want management."

Colonel Fleming had his own views on the subject of whether young women were manageable or not, but he did not think it necessary to impart them to worth little Mr. Bruce.

"I do not think," he said, as he rose to go, "that you will find that Miss Blair is a lady who will do violence to her feelings from any such motives."

"Violence—no indeed, colonel; I did not think of any violence in the matter. Young Mr. Travers has been with me, and from what he told me of their last interview, I should be inclined to think—well, perhaps it might be a breach of confidence—but still, as you are her guardian—"

"Tell me by all means, Mr. Bruce," said Colonel Fleming, eagerly; "what had she said to him?"

"Well, she had certainly given him a slight repulse, but Mr. Cecil Travers did not strike me as a hopeless lover at all; he seemed assured that with time and your assistance—in fact, my dear sir, as I said before, I believe the cause only wants a few judicious words from yourself to be won." And Mr. Bruce rubbed his hands together and smiled at his visitor in the most satisfied and delighted manner.

Colonel Fleming gravely assured him that he would endeavor to do his duty to Miss Blair in this as in every other respect, and then took his leave.

He wandered westwards in the lowest possible spirits; he dropped in at his tailor's and his banker's on the way, which did not take him very long and then sauntered into the East India Club and ordered himself a solitary dinner. A few old friends nodded to him as he went in. One asked him when he was going back to India, and he answered, with a sort of half groan, as soon as possible. On which Major-General Chutney—whose wife had come home hoping to cut a splash, which she found herself unable to do in a remote semi-detached stucco villa in Notting Hill, and consequently led her lord along a path that was anything but bordered with roses—answered that he was quite right; he only wished he could get back there; "the old country is a mistake, Fleming, depend upon it, quite a mistake."

And Hugh echoed his words gloomily, "Yes, a mistake wholly; how is your wife?"

"Thanks, Mrs. Chutney is well, poor thing; perhaps," added the general, insinuatingly, "perhaps—ahem, as you are, in town, you might look in upon her; it would gratify her very much to see an old friend; here is my card."

Hugh took the card and promised to call on the lady if he had time, wondering vaguely as he did so in what possible way it could gratify her, whilst his friend departed with many internal chuckles at the stroke of policy he had achieved.

"Very clever that of me about the calling," he said to himself, rubbing his hands gleefully together, "she'll like that, I know; shouldn't wonder if it kept her in good temper for a week—shouldn't wonder a bit!"

For Hugh Fleming happened to have a first cousin who was a lord; a lord whose name was frequently to be seen in the "Morning Post" in connection with other much greater names than his own. And although this was a fact to which my hero himself seldom gave a thought, and which it may be said that he had almost forgotten, seeing that his cousin had never done anything for him, nor even given him anything beyond occasionally his lordly hand to be shaken, and once, many years ago, a day's covert shooting in his preserves; still the fact of his cousinship remained, and Major-General Chutney well knew that his better half was not at all oblivious of it. To be able to say in familiar converse with the ladies of her acquaintance, "Colonel Fleming called on me to-day; such a dear fellow! an old friend of the general's and a first cousin of Lord So-and-so, you know, my dear, whose name I dare say you have often seen in the papers in attendance on His Royal Highness," would certainly be very gratifying indeed to the soul of Mrs. Major-General Chutney!

Left alone at the club, Hugh Fleming ate his dinner in moody silence, and wondered what on earth he should do with himself in town during the week he had said he should be away.

Truth to say, he had named that time for his absence because he had thought it good both for himself and for her that he should be away as long as possible, and not at all because of the amount that he had to do.

In fact, he had hardly anything to do. He was to go again the next day to see Mr. Bruce about the Dorsetshire farms; he had already visited his banker and his tailor; it

was hardly possible that he should go more than once again to see these gentlemen. He went to call next day on his only London relatives, an uncle and aunt living in Cavendish Square, from whom he had not even any expectations, and who were almost more surprised than pleased at his visit; and he did actually, with a view to killing time, go and call on Mrs. Chutney, in which amusement he succeeded in expending the whole of one afternoon, as that good lady, with true Indian hospitality, insisted on having up a refreshment tray, although it was but three o'clock in the day, and forced him into the consumption, much against his will, of a large slice of seed cake and a glass of very bad sherry. Finally he had his hair cut, and wandered up and down Bond Street and Pall Mall aimlessly and miserably for the whole of one day; and then he could stand it no longer. Two days short of the week he had promised to be away, he paid his hotel bill, packed up his portmanteau, drove to the station, and took his place in the midday express, which would bring him down to Sotherne in time for dinner, with an insane and perfectly unreasonable joy sadly unbecoming his mature years and the general seriousness of his aspect.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FIRST OF NOVEMBER.

It was on one of those days when Colonel Hugh Fleming was away up in London that "a southerly wind and a cloudy sky" ushered in the first of November.

Of all the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year the first day of November was to Squire Travers the most solemn and the most important.

The first meet of the season was held, according to a time-honored custom, on a small triangular-shaped common surrounded by three cross roads, and having in the centre a fine group of elm trees, known by the name of Waneberry Green.

Here, by eleven o'clock in the morning on the eventful day, were gathered together half the county-side. There were eight or ten carriages full of ladies on the road by the side of the turf—Lady Ellison driving her roan ponies with her daughter-in-law beside her; Mrs. Blair, in sables and a Paris bonnet, leaning back in the Sotherne barouche in solitary grandeur; fat, good-tem-

pered Mrs. Rollick, with her three plain but jolly daughters crammed up in the antiquated yellow family chariot, all four laughing and talking very loud indeed at once, side by side with the Countess of Stiffly, very thin and angular, sitting bolt upright in her brand new carriage, and casting withering glances of contempt and disgust at "those horrible Rollick girls;" and many other representatives of the county families. Besides these there were also most of the smaller fry of the neighborhood.

The parsons had come out to see the fun, with their wives and daughters, in unpretending little pony carriages; and the farmers' wives, in wonderful and gorgeous colors, driving themselves in their high tax-carts.

And then there were a goodly company of riders. Ladies of course in any number, most of them having merely ridden over to see the meet and to flirt with the men, though some few had a more business-like air, and looked as if they meant going by-and-by. Conspicuous amongst these latter is Juliet, on her three hundred guinea bay horse, side by side with Georgie Travers on her old chestnut.

Juliet with her face flushed rosy with the wind, and her beautiful figure shown off to full advantage by her perfectly fitting habit and by the splendid horse on which she is mounted, looks as lovely a picture as any one need wish to see, and is the centre of an admiring group of red-coated horsemen; but Georgie is a little nervous and anxious, and keeps looking about for Wattie Ellison, who has not yet appeared.

The squire of course is in great force, riding about from group to group, talking to the ladies in the carriages, waving his hand to this or that new-comer, consulting his watch every minute, and trotting rapidly up and down as full of business as a general on the eve of battle.

"Isn't your Wattie coming?" asks Juliet aside of Georgie, for her woman's wit has long ago guessed her little friend's secret. "Ah, there he is coming up to us now; how well he looks in pink! How do you do, Mr. Ellison? here is Georgie getting quite pale and anxious because you are so late!" And Juliet nods pleasantly as the two lovers with smiles and blushes take up their position at once side by side.

And now the clatter of hoofs is heard on the left, and, headed by Ricketts the hunts-

man, and backed up to the two whips, in a deep, compact and mottled mass, the pack of hounds comes trotting quickly on to the scene.

Then at once all is bustle and excitement; the squire gives the word, on go the hounds to draw the woods to the right, crack go the whips, too-too-too goes the horn, and with much hurry and commotion the whole body of riders follow in the wake of the master.

Then there is the usual waiting about at the cover side, the gleam of red coats dotted about the field turns the gray background of brushwood and the sombre plowed field into a holiday scene, all voices are hushed in the suppressed excitement of the moment, save only the squire's, who swears roundly at everything and everybody within hearing, whilst the hounds draw silently but closely through the wood.

Then all at once a whimper is heard, soon deepening into a mellow chorus: "Tally ho! Gone away! gone away!"

In a moment the hounds have burst from the wood, and after them dash the whole company helter-skelter, as fast as their horses can lay legs to the ground.

Such a confusion at the first few fences!

Some refuse, some jump on each other, some make for gates, whilst the timid riders turn back, and those who are left with the first flight settle themselves down to their work in earnest, and soon disappear over the shoulder of the hill.

In an incredibly short space of time Waneberry Green is deserted. The carriages have all driven off, some few to follow for a mile or two along the lane in hopes of coming across the hounds again, but most of them to turn in the direction of their respective homes. The lookers-on and followers on foot, who often see a good deal of the fun, have all disappeared; not a living soul is left; and the rooks, who have been disturbed from their haunts by the morning's noise and commotion, come cawing contentedly back to the elm trees in the middle of the little common.

They had a good run that morning, and foremost in the field was of course Georgie Travers, pressing close in her father's wake, and followed near by by Wattie Ellison. Georgie knew every inch of the country, every gap, every gate, every ditch.

She picked her own line with a cool head and scientific reckoning, she knew better than to waste her own strength or her

horse's at the beginning of the day with unnecessary exertions, but when there did come an unavoidable thick-set bullfinch or a stiff bit of timber, Georgie put the chestnut's head well at it, rammed in her little spurred heel, set her teeth hard, and was over it in a manner that made every man round her turn for an instant to admire.

Juliet Blair did not ride to hounds after this fashion. I am not sure that she would not at heart have considered it rather *infra dig.* for the owner of Sotherne Court to go rushing over hedges and ditches during the whole day in the reckless way that little Georgie Travers did.

Juliet followed for a little way in a leisurely lady-like manner, followed by her groom, and keeping rather aloof from the ruck of the hunt, till they came to the first check, and then she turned her horse's head into a side lane, left the hounds behind, and went for a quiet ride on her own account.

Juliet when she was going home, and long after she thought she had left every trace of the hunt behind her, she suddenly came upon Georgie and young Ellison riding side by side down a narrow lane with their heads and hands suspiciously close together.

"Hallo, Georgie! I left you in the front; how do you come here?"

"I got thrown out!" said Georgie, blushing, "and we have lost the hounds; have you seen anything of them?"

"Nothing whatever, and I don't suppose you want to see them, you very disgraceful young people!" said Juliet, laughing, as she cantered by.

Georgie and her lover rode on slowly.

"You will tell your father to-night, Georgie?" said the young man.

"Yes, I think I had better; but papa has been very worried lately by Cis."

"What has poor Cis been doing now?"

"Why, Juliet has refused him again," said Georgie, laughing.

"I am sure I am not surprised; how can your father expect her to have him?"

"Well, I don't know, but even now papa won't give up the idea; he is very savage with Cis, and it is a good thing the poor boy is away. Certainly, Cis inherits papa's dogged determination if he inherits nothing else, for he won't give her up a bit. I rather like him for it. O Wattie, Wattie!" she cried, suddenly, "there are the hounds; come along."

And Georgie was over the hedge in a minute and away, as a gleam of scarlet and white through a break in the woodland told them that they had again fallen in with the lost hunt.

Such a run they had in the afternoon! thirty-five minutes without a check; it quite eclipsed the little spurt of the morning.

It was very late that afternoon when Georgie and her father, stiff, tired and muddy, dismounted at their own hall door, and limped into the house, whilst their steeds, looking tucked up and dragged, were led away to their well-earned gruel.

Little Flora came flying down stairs three steps at a time to meet them.

"Have you killed a fox, papa? where is his head?" she cried, clinging to her father's muddy coat-tails.

Mrs. Travers, following slowly, lugubriously said it was a mercy they hadn't broken their necks this time, as if they were in the habit of doing so.

"O papa!" cried little Flora, "do let me ride with you some day on Snowflake; I know I could go quite well without a leading rein."

"So you shall, my little girl," said the squire, lifting her up and kissing her, "I'll make another Georgie of you some day, when she goes and marries, and leaves her old daddy!" And the old man winked and nodded at his eldest daughter in a manner that made her quite hopeful about the confession that was hanging over her.

"Please go and take off your dirty things, Georgie, and make haste," said her mother. "Flora, you naughty child, you have covered your nice clean frock with mud; and I wish, Mr. Travers, you wouldn't put such ideas into the child's head; I am sure one daughter rushing about all day with a pack of men, and unsexing herself among stable boys is enough in a family. I hope to see Flora grow up a lady like her sister Mary."

"Stuff and nonsense!" growled the squire, fiercely; "there isn't one of 'em can hold a candle to Georgie; I won't hear her abused, ma'am. Unsexed, indeed! did ye ever hear such a word! d'ye want her to ride in a flannel petticoat? is it her wearing breeches that you mind?"

"Don't be so coarse, squire," said his wife, looking deeply offended, whilst her spouse retired into his dressing-room with a loud guffaw of certainly rather unrefined laughter.

It was in the evening, after dinner, when the squire had retired to his study to smoke his nocturnal pipe that Georgie came and stood at the back of her father's chair.

"Papa, I have something to say to you," she began, softly stroking the top of his bald head.

"What is it, my girl? I suppose you want another hunter this winter; well, I have been thinking myself the chestnut is looking a little bit shaky on his forelegs, though there's no doubt he carried you well to-day, very well—couldn't have gone better; but still I know he won't last forever. There's that brown mare, I meant her for you, and—there, I'll give her to you outright for your own; but I suppose you'll be wanting another. Well, if you're a good girl I'll see what I can do for you."

"But, papa, it isn't about horses at all," said Georgie, timidly.

"Not about horses!" he exclaimed, looking up at her. "Well, what is it, eh?"

"You—you said to-day, papa—perhaps some day I might—I might think about marriage."

"Eh? what, what! marriage, is it? Ah, my girl, I shan't know how to part with you, but I won't be selfish; never fear, my dear, the old man won't be selfish. I won't say nay to any good man who will make my little girl happy and keep her as well mounted as she deserves to be. Who is the man? out with it, Georgie; who is the happy man?"

"O papa, I'm afraid it isn't at all a good match for me, not so good as you would like, but he is such a dear fellow, and I am so very fond of him."

"Well—out with it; who is he?" said her father, impatiently.

"Wattie Ellison!" faltered the girl, hanging down her head.

"What!" thundered the squire, jumping up from his chair and turning round on her—whilst his best meerschaum pipe fell shattered at his feet. "What! how dare you mention that good-for-nothing young scoundrel to me? how dare you think of such a thing? confound his impudence! so that's what all your riding about together has come to, is it! I wouldn't have believed it of you, Georgie, I wouldn't have believed it!"

"O papa, don't be so angry," cried Georgie, tearfully, clasping her hands together "we couldn't help loving each other."

"Loving! pack of nonsense. I am ashamed of you, Georgie. You don't suppose any father in his senses would allow his daughter to marry an idle young pauper like that. How dare he lift his eyes to you! how dare he make love to you! that's what I want to know. Of all the dishonorable, mean, base, contemptible young blackguards—"

"Papa, papa!" cried Georgie, frantically.

"O, ay, I mean what I say, and a good horsewhipping is what Mr. Wattie Ellison deserves, and that's what I would like to give him, and kick him out of the house afterwards, the impudent young scoundrel!"

And at this very moment the footman opened the door and in an impassive voice announced "Mr. Walter Ellison."

At this most unexpected and undesirable appearance on the scene of the young gentleman under discussion, poor Georgie went very nearly out of her mind with despair.

The squire, speechless with fury, and almost foaming at the mouth, literally flew at the throat of his would-be son-in-law, and, seizing him by the collar of his coat, shook him as a terrier shakes a rat.

"What d'ye mean by it? How dare you, you scoundrel? You d—d young rascal!" he panted out breathlessly, whilst Georgie rushed at him to defend her attacked lover.

"I don't see that I need be so dreadfully sworn at, sir," said Wattie, as soon as he was able to speak. "It is not my fault that your daughter is so charming that I could not help falling in love with her, and if you would allow us to be engaged we could wait, and I dare say I could get something to do, and you would help us a little perhaps."

"I'll see you d—d before ever I give you or her a farthing, sir, of that you may be sure; and as to allowing her to be engaged to you, I'd as soon allow her to be engaged to Mike the earthstopper, quite as soon—much sooner, in fact."

"Hush, hush, papa!" here broke in Georgie, with a very white face. "You need not say any more—you will be sorry for having spoken like this by-and-by."

"I shan't be a bit sorry. I mean every word I say. When this young gentleman goes out of the house this evening, I forbid him ever to come into it again. I forbid you ever to speak to him, or write to him, or hold any communication with him what-

ever; if you do, I will disown you for my daughter, and never speak to you again; and I tell you, Georgie, that sooner than see you married, or even engaged, to such an idle, profitless good-for-nothing as this young man, I would rather by far see you in your coffin."

There were a few moments' silence in the little room when the squire finished speaking, and then Georgie, white to her very lips, but brave and resolute as the little woman always was where courage and resolution were wanted, went straight up to her lover.

"You hear what papa says, Wattie; do not stop here any longer, it is no use, he will never allow it, we must just make the best of it and submit. He is my father, and I wouldn't disobey him for worlds. You had better go right away, my poor boy, and try and forget me. Yes, don't shake your head, Wattie; if it's impossible, we shall perhaps learn with time and with absence to get over it. O Wattie, give me one kiss and say good-by!" And she put both her arms round her lover's neck and kissed and clung to him sobbing, whilst her father stood by, looking on, but saying never a word, with a sort of choke in his throat of which he felt half ashamed.

"Good-by, my love—God bless you, Wattie; as long as you are alive I will never marry any other man on earth. Go now." And she pushed him with her own hands gently out of the room and closed the door upon him.

"My own brave good girl!" said the squire, when he was gone, attempting to draw his daughter into his arms, but Georgie shrunk away from him.

"Don't touch me, don't speak to me," she said, and then sat down till she heard the front door close with a slam, and Wattie's footsteps die away on the gravel walk outside.

Then she got up and moved very unsteadily towards the door. The squire sprang forward and held it open for her, looking at her wistfully, almost entreatingly, as she passed out; but she fixed her eyes in front of her and did not look at him.

And somehow, when she was gone and he was left alone, although his daughter had given up her lover and promised to obey him, and although he had sworn his fill at the young fellow and had not even been answered again, the old man did not

feel very triumphant; he did not seem to have had the best of it at all in the encounter that was just over, but rather very much the worst of it. He had a vague idea that he had taken an inglorious part altogether, and felt rather small and contemptible in his own eyes.

"Nonsense, nonsense," he said to himself at last, "of course I was quite right—quite right—any father in my place would have done the same—impudent young scoundrell and how was I to know the girl would take it in that meek way? girls don't generally. I didn't like the look in her face, though, when she went out. I hope it won't make any difference between her and me, though. O, she'll get over it fast enough! I think I'll give her a new saddle; she wants one badly—yes, I'll do that for her; that will please her, I know."

And no sooner had this brilliant idea come into his mind, than he sat down and wrote to his saddler in London to send down as soon as possible a new lady's saddle of the very best that money could buy.

When he had directed and stamped this letter, and dropped it into the letter box outside in the hall, he felt happier in his mind, and went up stairs and joined the rest of his family in the drawing-room, but Georgie was not there.

No word was said between Georgie and her father of what had passed between them either the next day nor on any of the days that followed. The girl went about her duties as usual, but very quietly and unobtrusively. She wrote her father's letters and read the paper to him and walked up to the stables and kennels with him as she was always accustomed to do, but silently, listlessly, without any of her natural energy and enthusiasm. You could see there was no longer any pleasure or spirit in her life for her. She was not in the least sulky, she was perfectly sweet, and gentle, and submissive to her father, and when the new saddle came down she showed as much affectionate gratitude to him as he could possibly have expected, and yet everything was different.

There was no longer that unity in thought and purpose, that perfect confidence that had always bound the two together in a tie that resembled a devoted friendship rather than the relation which father and daughter generally bear to each other.

The next hunting day Georgie, much to

her father's relief, for he had been dreadfully afraid that she might refuse to go out, appeared at breakfast as usual in her habit. She rode the new brown mare, who, although she fidgeted a good deal at starting, and lashed out once or twice at the covert side in an unpleasant-looking way, still when she was once fairly going, certainly acquitted herself as if she knew her business.

Wattie Ellison was not there, and Georgie and her father both overheard Sir George Ellison say, in answer to some inquiries after him, that his nephew had taken a fit of industry and gone to town to court fortune in his old chambers in the Temple.

To Juliet Blair the girl said a few words concerning her trouble. Juliet saw at once that something had gone wrong with her little friend.

"What has happened, Georgie?" she asked in a whisper, as the two found themselves side by side during a check in a deep lane. "You look so miserable."

"I am miserable, Juliet," answered the girl, and her lip quivered. "It is all over between me and Wattie; he has gone away; papa won't hear of it; he was very angry."

"What a shame! why should he be angry? I am sure Wattie is a man anybody might be proud of."

"Thanks, Juliet dear, but papa was quite right," answered Georgie, loyal as ever to her father; "I knew he would not allow it. You see, Wattie has no money and no prospects whatever; one's sense tells one it was impossible."

"How I wish I could help you!" cried Juliet, ever ready for a generous action. "Now, don't you think I could make you a good fat allowance, just to start you in life, you know? You wouldn't be proud, I know, for after all half the use of money is that now and then one can make somebody one cares for happy—don't you think we could manage it?"

"I am afraid not, you dear good Juliet! not that I should be proud a bit; but you see papa would not hear of such a thing, nor Wattie either; that is the worst of these men," added Georgie with a sigh.

"What, not even if I was your sister-in-law?" said Juliet, laughing.

"Ah yes, then, perhaps, O dear, Juliet, how I wish you could manage to marry Cis. Papa would be so pleased; poor papa! it is hard on him that both his children should give him so much trouble and anxiety in

their love affairs." At this instant a hallo was heard, and Juliet, who was going home, waved her hand in farewell to her friend, who put the brown mare neatly over a stile and galloped off across a grass field to join the hounds.

CHAPTER IX.

COLONEL FLEMING ADVISES HIS WARD.

"I WONDER when he will come back," said Juliet to herself as she rode slowly up to her own hall door. "Not till the day after to-morrow, I suppose."

It still wanted two days of the week he had said he would be away, and Juliet, as she dismounted and went in, felt that she had never known a week to be so interminably long as this one had been.

She went into the little morning-room. The short winter afternoon was drawing in, and the room was but dimly lighted by the flicker of the firelight.

"Let us have some tea," said Juliet, flinging down her hat and gloves on the table and ringing the bell, and then she stooped down in front of the fire and began warming her hands.

Somebody rose from the sofa in the half light and came and stood behind her on the hearthrug. She thought it was her step-mother.

"I am very cold," she said.

"Are you?" said a voice that was certainly not Mrs. Blair's.

She jumped up with a glad cry of surprise.

"Hugh!" she exclaimed in her delight, unconsciously calling him by his Christian name for the first time, and holding out both her hands to him; and he took the hands and held them tight in his own, and then, with an impulse which he was unable to resist, drew her suddenly towards him and kissed her once on the forehead.

Ah! How many days were to pass away ere ever his lips repeated that unexpected and all too deliciously sweet caress!

"You are glad to see me again, then?" he asked, as Juliet drew back from him a little confusedly.

"Yes, so glad," she answered, looking away from him with brightly crimsoned cheeks. "I had no idea you were here. What brought you back sooner than you expected?"

"The three-thirty express. My business was over; there was no longer any reason for my staying away."

And then Higgs and the footman came in with the teatray and the candles, followed almost immediately by the rustle of Mrs. Blair's silk dress along the passage.

"Why, Colonel Fleming!" exclaimed that lady, "when did you come back? I never heard you arrive! Why, how quickly you have done all your London business; how much more lively I should have thought it must be for a man to be up in dear delightful London, with all the clubs, and Bond Street, and the shops, and the theatres, than down in the wilds of the country with only two women to amuse him; shouldn't you have thought so, Juliet?"

"You underrate your own fascinations, Mrs. Blair!" said Hugh with a gallant bow, whilst Juliet, still thrilling from head to foot with the memory of that kiss, busied herself silently at the tea-table.

About that same kiss Hugh Fleming took himself afterwards very seriously to task. It was not at all in the programme of grave coldness and guardian-like severity of demeanor which he had drawn out for himself, and was quite incompatible with that stern line of duty and high principle to which he had determined most strictly to adhere. It was wonderful how, at the first sight of that graceful girl, with her small dark head and soul-inflaming eyes, all these good resolutions had melted and vanished away, and left him so weak that he had not been able to resist even the small temptation of kissing her.

It was only by going over and over again all the old arguments of honor, and duty, and right, feeling during the course of a somewhat restless and sleepless night, that Hugh Fleming could at all bring himself round again to the very proper determination which Mr. Bruce's arguments and his own conscience had succeeded in implanting deeply in his mind.

He must do this hard duty by her; he must plead his rival's cause; he must if possible persuade her to look more favorably on Cis Travers's suit, and then he had better get himself back to India as quickly as he could; for to stop by and see her married to another under his eyes was surely a pitch of self-torture and self-abnegation which could not possibly be required of him.

"Will you come out and take a turn in the garden with me, Juliet?" he asked of her as they rose from breakfast the next

morning; "It is a nice bright day for a stroll, and I have something to say to you."

Juliet gladly consented and went to fetch her hat.

They wandered out together towards the shrubberies, talking lightly first of one thing, then of another; Hugh, like a coward, delaying the evil moment as long as possible. Did he guess, perhaps, how rudely his hand was to tear away all her brightest dreams?

At last there was a sudden pause in their talk, and Hugh began hesitatingly:

"I said I had something to say to you."

"Yes?" she said, inquiringly, breaking off a little branch of crimson-berried yew from the hedge along which they were walking.

"It is perhaps a difficult subject for me to broach to you, Juliet, and one which I can hardly dare hope you will listen to from me, but it has been forced upon my conviction of late, that it is perhaps my duty to speak to you very plainly indeed upon this matter."

"Why should you not speak plainly to me?" she answered, looking down at the red berries in her hand and fingering them nervously.

"It is the matter of your marriage," he said, gravely.

And then she answered, with, poor girl! heaven knows what a beating heart, and with all the hopes and fears of a glad love trembling in her low broken voice, "Speak to me as plainly as you will; speak to me from your heart, Colonel Fleming, not as guardian to ward, but as man to woman; that is how I shall like you best to speak." In a moment it had flashed across her that because she was rich and he was poor, because he was her guardian and she his ward, therefore it was that he hesitated to speak what was in his heart towards her.

"Unfortunately, my dear Juliet," he answered, after a moment's silence, during which every demon that understands the art of temptation had fought a pitched battle within him and been defeated—"unfortunately it is exactly as a guardian to a ward that I wish to speak to you. I think you have hardly given the subject of a marriage with Cecil Travers as much attention and consideration as the idea demands from you."

The crimson berries dropped from her nerveless fingers upon the path, and every vestige of color faded from her face.

Colonel Fleming went on, speaking rather rapidly.

"I had no idea until lately how ~~very~~ much your poor father's heart was set upon it, and how completely the match was of his own special planning and arranging for you."

No answer, only Juliet walked on rather faster by his side.

"Cecil Travers is certainly a most steady and deserving young fellow, and is, as I need not remind you, very much attached to you personally. He is, I am sure, quite above any sordid considerations, and will value you for yourself and not for your money, as so many of the men you will meet in the world might do. Don't you agree with me?"

Still no answer; Miss Blair walks rapidly on.

"From what Mr. Bruce tells me," continued Colonel Fleming, "and from what, indeed, I know myself of your affairs, it would be certainly a great advantage for the two properties to be united; it appears that the whole of those outlying farms in the Lynedale valley, which now form a part of Mr. Travers's property, did in point of fact actually belong to your great-grandfather, who sold them very much beneath their value to the Travers family in order to pay the debts of a younger son. Now, such a proceeding was of course an iniquity, and if you can in any way repair and make up for the sins of your ancestors by restoring the property to its original fair dimensions it is no doubt incumbent on you to do so. *Noblesse oblige*, my dear Juliet; in your position of responsibility you are not quite the free agent which young ladies are generally supposed to be in these matters, and you owe a certain distinct duty, not only to your predecessors, but also, if I may be allowed to say so, to those that are to come after you."

Then Colonel Fleming comes perforce to an end of his arguments, having, in fact, nothing more to urge.

"You are well primed, Colonel Fleming!" cries Juliet, sarcastically. "Mr. Bruce has supplied you with the usual stereotyped sentences. I have heard all that you have been saying, a great many times before," and she laughed a short, dry and not pleasant laugh.

"I don't know, if the things are true, that they are any the worse for having been

said before," says her guardian, almost humbly.

And then Juliet stops short in her walk and turns upon him with angry flashing eyes:

"And do you mean to say, Colonel Fleming, that you, of all people on the earth, advise me to marry Cecil Travers?"

"Really, Juliet—" he begins, hesitatingly, quailing somewhat before her righteous wrath.

"Answer me!" she cries, stamping her foot, "do you wish me to marry Cecil Travers?—Yes or no, answer me!" and Hugh, not daring for his own sake to answer her "No," replies—"Yes."

"May God forgive you for that lie!" answers Juliet, and deliberately turning her back upon him, she walks away into the house.

Things after that are very uncomfortable indeed at Sotherne Court for several days. Juliet is deeply, bitterly offended with her guardian, and will not speak to him more than she can possibly avoid.

That he should have spoken to her as he did, ignoring all that had passed between them of tender meaning and unspoken sympathy, was in itself a bitter source of grief to her, but that he should have deliberately insulted her by pleading the cause of his rival, is a thing which Juliet thinks, and perhaps thinks rightly, that no woman ought ever wholly to forgive to the man whom she loves.

By some mysterious means of her own, whether it is by letters from Mr. Bruce, or whether Ernestine's powers of observation have again been called into requisition, I am not prepared to say, but certain it is that Mrs. Blair is conscious not only of the coolness that exists between Juliet and her guardian, but also is perfectly aware of the cause for that coolness.

And this state of things affords her intense satisfaction.

Mrs. Blair, as has probably been seen long ago, divined that the interest which Colonel Fleming took in Juliet exceeded that amount of interest which a guardian may legitimately feel for a young lady who is in the position of his ward.

It seemed to Mrs. Blair that, given a man with no private fortune, and in a position of great intimacy in the house of a young lady largely gifted with all the good things of this world, what more natural than that

the poor man should do his best to gain possession of those good things?

Now, that Colonel Fleming should marry her stepdaughter would not at all have suited Mrs. Blair's views for her own future arrangements.

Colonel Fleming was not a man over whom Mrs. Blair felt she could obtain the smallest influence; she knew instinctively that he disliked and mistrusted her; and as Juliet did the same, anything like an understanding between the two would probably be the signal for her own departure from the very comfortable quarters in which she was at present installed. Although, with a weak youth like Cecil Travers, the widow felt that things would probably be very different, still I am not sure but that to put Cecil prominently in the foreground, in order to keep other and more formidable rivals at bay, was more her object than to urge on a marriage either with him or any one else. She felt that, if she could get Colonel Fleming safely back to India without his having proposed to Juliet, she should have gained a great deal.

Unconsciously, honest little Mr. Bruce, whose faith in the claims of the "Travers alliance" was part of his creed with reference to Miss Blair, played into the widow's hands with a promptitude and unsuspectingness for which she was constantly invoking blessings on his worthy head. And she had yet another advocate—of which, however, she was quite unaware—in the scrupulous feelings of honor and delicacy which formed a part of Colonel Fleming's character. Instead of being a fortune-hunter, as in her own mind Mrs. Blair had designated him, he was, on the contrary, ready to sacrifice not only his own happiness, but also Juliet's, if need be, sooner than in any way to court a woman whose wealth was to him only a disadvantage, and not in the very least a temptation.

After that conversation in the garden in which Colonel Fleming had given his advice so very ineffectually to his ward, his manner to her became entirely changed; he was continually on his guard with her, constantly watching his own words and actions, so that he became reserved and even cold and distant to her.

Juliet fretted vainly over this change. To her impulsive affectionate nature such an alteration in one who had hitherto been uniformly kind and indulgent to her was

inexpressibly painful. Her own resentment against him had been but short-lived, and had he but met her half way, she would have been only too glad to have forgotten all that he had said, and have let everything be as usual between them.

Things were in this state when a dinner-party which had been for some time in contemplation took place at Sotherne Court.

Sir George and Lady Ellison, Mr. and Mrs. Travers and Georgie, and the Rollick family, were among the guests.

A country dinner-party is not as a rule a lively entertainment; the conversation is purely of local topics, and to a stranger the ins and outs of country gossip are apt to be inexpressibly wearisome.

It is bad enough at dinner, but after dinner, in the drawing-room, when the ladies are left alone, it is ten times worse. Lady Ellison gets hold of a young married woman to whom she proceeds to unfold her views on the nourishment of very young infants. Mrs. Blair descants on the superiority of French ladies-maids to Mrs. Travers, who thanks God piously that she never had a fine ladies-maid at all, either French or English! Presently two of the Miss Rollicks good-naturedly go to the piano and warble a duet.

"O, were I on the zephyr's wing!" trill out these substantial maidens together, which makes Georgie Travers wickedly whisper that, if they were, they would very speedily tumble down; Mrs. Rollick sits by, fanning her portly person placidly, and smiling sweetly at her offspring, whilst Juliet and Georgie whisper together in a corner about poor Wattle.

"My dear," says Mrs. Rollick, who has a knack of making awkward remarks, nodding pleasantly across to Juliet—"My dear, how long is that very good-looking guardian of yours going to stay here?"

Juliet is angry with herself for getting red as she answers, "As long as I can keep him, I hope."

"Ah!" says the good lady, nodding and winking, "if I were you I would try and keep him altogether; perhaps that is what you mean to do, eh?"

Here Mrs. Blair remarks casually, "I believe that Colonel Fleming's leave is nearly over, Mrs. Rollick; he will be returning to India almost immediately, I fancy."

And for once, although she hates her for

saying it, Juliet feels grateful to her step-mother.

She gets up and goes over to the Miss Rollicks, who have just ended their duet, and asks them to sing another, which they eagerly and joyfully proceed to do.

"I know a maiden fair to see!" said Miss Arabella Rollick, archly smiling round on the company generally.

"Beware! take care!" echoes Miss Eleanor Rollick in a deep lugubrious contralto.

"She's fooling thee!" continues Miss Arabella, confidentially winking down the room.

And then there is a commotion at the door, and all the gentlemen come in very close together, turn round just inside the room, and go on with what they were talking about before they came in.

Lady Ellison and the young married woman hastily push their chairs apart and finish off their last confidences on the subject of the infants in a whisper.

The squire has button-holed Sir George Ellison in the doorway, and is saying in a loud voice, "Unless we can improve the breed of horses, sir, unless we can improve the breed, the country *must* go to the dogs!"

"Ah, we must improve the breed of dogs then, ha! ha!" says Sir George, with a feeble attempt at a mild joke, endeavoring to sidle away from his tormentor and to get into the middle of the room—a stratagem which the squire immediately circumvents by backing in front of him, holding him tight by the arm, and talking at the top of his voice.

Mr. Rollick, who is very small and thin, and altogether gives one the idea of a man much sat upon by the females of his family, is telling the young married woman's husband, who is a curate, for the third time, that the crop of mangel wurzels is remarkably *fine this year*, "re—markably fine." The curate, whose interest in that vegetable is not absorbing, answers rather irrelevantly, "Exactly so!" and looks round the room to see if his wife is sitting in a draught, which is his prevailing anxiety. Two young officers who have come over from the neighboring garrison town stand for a moment together, and ejaculate to each other, "Deuced good sherry!" and "Deuced fine gal!" the latter remark being pointed at Juliet; after which the Rollick girls, having come successfully to the end of "Beware," bear down upon these gentlemen from the

opposite side of the room, and carry them off in triumph into separate corners, there to torment them at leisure.

Lastly Hugh Fleming saunters into the room, looking very much bored, glances for one moment at Juliet, and then sinks down into a low chair by the side of Georgie Travers, to whom he has taken rather a like.

Squire Travers having backed himself into the middle of the room, still discoursing noisily by the way upon the breed of horses, catches his foot in the folds of Mrs. Rollick's amber-satin gown, among which he flounders about hopelessly, and nearly tumbles headlong on to that lady's portly lap.

Juliet goes laughingly to his rescue, and then, with a view to the release of the much-enduring baronet, carries him off to a distant sofa for "a talk."

The squire is pleased with the attention; he is very fond of Juliet, and always looks upon her in the light of his future daughter-in-law. "My little Georgie looks well, doesn't she?" he says, looking across to his daughter.

"Not at all, Mr. Travers," answers Juliet, remorselessly; "I never saw her look less well; she looks as white and ill as possible; I am afraid you have been giving her something to fret about lately!"

"Eh, eh what! what's the girl been grumbling about? you don't really think she looks ill, do you, Miss Juliet?" This is said anxiously. Juliet answers that she really does think so, and the squire scratches his thin gray hair, and mutters—"God bless my soul! I can't let her go and marry a young pauper without a farthing, you know!"

"No, but you might give her a little hope," pleads Juliet.

"Well, and are you going to give me a little hope about my boy?" says he, dexterously turning the tables on her; "answer me that, Miss Juliet, and then I'll see what I can do for Georgie—not before, mind, not before!" And the argument is so unanswerable that Juliet is not able to continue the discussion.

And then, to everybody's relief, Lady Ellison's carriage is announced, and there is a general move; every one saying, as they wish good-night, what a pleasant evening they have spent, and no one honestly thinking so, except the Rollick girls, who have made great way with the two officers, and got them to promise to come over to lunch next Sunday.

The last of the carriages drives off, and as Mrs. Blair goes up to bed, Juliet lingers a moment in the hall, and presently Colonel Fleming comes out to her; she lifts her eyes to his with a sort of dumb entreaty for mercy.

"Are you still angry with me?" she asks.

"Angry! what can you be thinking of? how could I be angry with you?" Something makes him more than half inclined to take her into his arms then and there, but he resists the temptation, and only says half playfully, half tenderly—"Go to bed, child, and don't take such silly ideas into your head!"

And Juliet sprang up stairs with a blither step and with a lighter heart than she had had for some days.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

THE HEIRESS AND HER GUARDIAN.

A TALE OF ENGLISH COUNTRY LIFE.

BY MRS. H. LOVETT CAMERON.

[This Story was commenced in the November Number of the Magazine.]

CHAPTER X.

THE MELODIOUS MINSTRELS.

WHEN Cecil Travers had met with that rebuff from the lady of his affections which has been recorded in a previous chapter, he had not been at all sorry to carry out her parting injunctions.

Broadley House became, so to speak, uninhabitable for Squire Travers's only son, and Squire Travers himself had taken care to make it so. During the two days that he had remained at home after having been refused by Juliet, Cis ardently wished himself anywhere but under the paternal roof.

His father sneered and scoffed at him all day long.

He wasn't surprised that no sensible girl would have him; he shouldn't wonder if he hadn't had the pluck to ask her right out; he supposed he went whining and whimpering to her like a schoolgirl, instead of speaking up to her like a man; girls, especially spirited clever girls, like Juliet, couldn't abide mollycoddles—and so on, till Cis very nearly lost his temper; and it was a pity that he didn't quite do so, for his father would have respected him ten times more if he had.

Finally, Cis having declared that he was not at all hopeless of eventual success, his father answered that it was like his vanity to say so; but that he was very glad to hear it, for he intended to see Juliet Blair his daughter-in-law before he died; and that, if Cis stuck to her like a man, and asked her often enough, she was quite certain to give in at last.

The upshot of it was, that old Travers gave his son a liberal check, and told him to go up to London, away from his mollycoddling mother, and see if he couldn't get some sense into his head, and see a little life.

Cis accordingly, feeling very much like the prodigal son, pocketed his check, and, nothing loth to escape from the storms of home life, went his way up to London.

There, as has been seen, he visited Mr. Bruce, took that gentleman considerably into his confidence, and felt much cheered and consoled by the very hopeful view which he took of his prospects, and also by the eager partisanship for his cause evinced by the worthy solicitor.

Mr. Bruce, like Mr. Travers senior, was of the opinion that perseverance was the main thing required, and that, if the young lady was but asked often enough, she was certain to yield at the end.

Only of course time must be given.

"Take your time, my dear Mr. Cecil," he said, assuringly; "take your time; ladies never like being hurried. A little management is all that is required, and plenty of time." And Cis, as he wished him good-bye, felt almost triumphant already.

Cis, left to his own resources in London, was not nearly so much a fish out of water as he was in his own home. He belonged to a young University Club, in its first stages, and here he was sure to meet plenty of his friends—men of his own college and of his own standing, who did not know nor care that he could not sit a horse, but who did know and were mindful of that first in "mods." of which his own father had spoken so disparagingly, and amongst whom he had in consequence some reputation for talent.

These young gentlemen—whose whiskers, like Cecil's, were small, and whose heads were for the most part filled with inordinate vanity, coated over with a thin layer of information—nevertheless counted themselves among the rising minds of their time.

When they met together they discoursed eagerly upon the principal religious and political subjects of the day, and honestly believed that their opinions were altogether new and original, and were destined to exercise a great and lasting influence on the history of their country.

Amongst these young men Cis found himself quite an authority. Instead of being snubbed, sneered at, and sat upon from

morning till night, his opinion was asked, and he was attentively listened to when he gave it; he made little speeches, and they were enthusiastically cheered; and altogether he was conscious of being considered by his clique to be a very clever and rising young man. So true is it that a prophet hath no honor in his own country!

All his friends were not, however, of the same stamp. One day, as he was wandering idly down Piccadilly, staring in at the shop windows, a tall young fellow, in loose ill-made clothes, and with a ragged red beard, stopped suddenly before him, exclaiming:

"Surely you must be little Cis Travers!"

"So I am, at your service—and you? Why, it's David Anderson! We haven't met since we left school—fancy your remembering me!"

"I should have known you anywhere? What are you doing in town—nothing? You must come to my diggings. Wont you? What are you going to do to-night? Nothing particular—I thought so; well, then, you must positively come to our meeting. We hold our weekly meeting to-night."

"Who are *we*?" asked Cis.

"Why, the 'Melodious Minstrels,'—our musical society, you know. Of course you are fond of music?"

"Ye—s, I suppose so," said Cis, doubtfully, recollecting that he was rather fond of listening to Juliet's singing.

"Yes, of course you are; every one with a soul loves music. Well, then, I can promise you a treat to-night; none of your trash, I promise you—real good first-class—the music of the future, you know—Wagner, and Beethoven, and Schumann, too. Here is the address," giving him a card on which was inscribed—"Herr Franz Rudenbach, 114 Blandford Street."

"But, my dear Anderson," objected Cis, "how on earth can I go to this place, and who is Herr Rudenbach?"

"O, he is our conductor and fiddler, you know, and with *such* a daughter! perfectly lovely! plays like an angel! You'd come for the daughter if you knew what she was like, I can tell you!" And Mr. David Anderson lifted up his hands and eyes, smacked his lips, and went through other gymnastic exercises indicative of his extreme admiration of the lady in question.

"You must come, you know, Cis; you'll

be delighted. Nine o'clock sharp, mind; be sure you come. Good-by." And Mr. Anderson bolted swiftly round the corner of the street.

Cis felt very dubious about the evening's entertainment; but, when the time came, partly moved by curiosity concerning the fair Miss Rudenbach, and partly through a wish to please his old schoolfellow, he found himself, a little after nine o'clock, at the indicated house in Blandford Street.

As he went up the narrow stairs of the dingy little house, a strange Babel of sounds met his ear: scrapings of violins, too-toosings of cornets, mixed with noises the like of which he had never heard before, made him imagine that a farmyard had been let loose in the room above him.

As he reached the top step a guttural German voice cried out:

"Now then, gentlemen. One, two, three, four—off!" And the performers started.

It was Beethoven's Toy Symphony. And any one who remembers his impressions on hearing this performance for the first time will understand the absolute amazement with which Cis Travers, to whom it was a complete novelty, listened at the doorway.

He thought at first that he had stumbled on a company of lunatics. Ten young men were grouped around the piano, each armed with a different so-called "instrument." One had a child's drum, another a penny trumpet, another a whistle, one had a row of bells on a stick, another a sort of tambourine; but the most awful instrument of all was a small box, exactly like the stand of a child's toy dog, which when pressed emitted two sharp, short deafening squeaks, supposed to imitate the note of the cuckoo.

When all these varied instruments burst into play at once, with doubtful tune and most uncertain time, the effect was simply Pandemonium. Herr Rudenbach stood in the midst, with his baton, and shouted "Time, time!" at every bar, whilst his daughter Gretchen slaved away at the piano. Innocent, blue-eyed Gretchen, with her calm sweet face, and her smooth brown Madonna-like head! Cis Travers could not but acknowledge that David Anderson had shown his good taste in admiring her. She looked so out of place, so superior to her surroundings, like some garden flower grown up by chance in a field of weeds.

Wonders were never to cease that evening. Looking round the room towards the

six or eight young men who composed the audience, Cis was astonished to recognize Wattie Ellison lounging back in an arm-chair and sketching Gretchen's profile in his pocket-book.

David Anderson, who was gravely playing the tambourine—indeed, the intense gravity of all the performers struck Cis at once as something very ludicrous, considering the ridiculous childishness of the instruments on which they were performing—David nodded at Cis over his music, and went on with his playing, and Cis sidled up to Wattie.

"Are they all mad, Wattie? and how on earth do you come here?" he whispered.

"I might ask the same," answered Wattie, in the same tone. "Aren't they idiots? But it is very amusing, and little Gretchen's face is perfect. I am going to paint a historical picture; I don't know quite what the subject is to be, I haven't settled—the massacre of St. Bartholomew, or the burning of Joan of Arc, or something of that kind. I think I shall make something of it, and I want Gretchen's face for one of my figures. That is what I am here for; I am studying it. It's miserable work losing all the hunting season for this sort of thing, isn't it? How are your people, Cis?"

Here the Toy Symphony came providentially to an end, and David Anderson went up to speak to his old schoolfellow, and introduced him to Herr Rudenbach, who bowed and smirked upon him with exaggerated humility, whilst Gretchen came forward in her gray stuff dress, made high up to the neck, and spoke a few gentle words to him.

Then two young gentlemen played a duet on two violins, which was really a very creditable performance, and was boisterously clapped and vociferously encored by the rest of the community; after which an unpretending little tray of refreshments was brought in and handed round—lemonade, and gin, and water, the latter beverage being generally preferred; slices of pound cake, and dry untempting-looking sandwiches from the ham-and-beef shop round the corner, which were nevertheless partaken of with avidity by the guests.

"Come home to my rooms, Cis," said Wattie Ellison, when, having feasted upon the abovenamed refreshments, the little society prepared to break up; and, linking his arm within that of Georgie's brother, he

carried him off with him to the Temple.

But that was by no means the last of Cis Travers's visits to the house in Blandford Street, nor to the meetings of the "Melodious Minstrels."

Partly through sheer idleness, partly through a certain pleasure in playing the great man among a set of men who, being chiefly city clerks, or else embryo solicitors, looked up to him as to a superior order of being, Cis grew rather fond of dropping in sometimes during these weekly musical performances.

And little Gretchen got to look for his coming. With the instinct of true refinement, she learned at once to distinguish him and his friend Wattie Ellison from the other young men, of David Anderson's stamp, who came to her father's rooms. Cis was kind to her, and took pains to talk to her and to be interested in her. And he was to her as a god.

It was very pleasant to him to be so regarded. In the present sore and wounded state of his heart and feelings, consequent upon his rejection by Juliet Blair, it was inexpressibly soothing to him to be worshipped and waited upon by any woman so young and so pretty as Gretchen Rudenbach. This girl did not snub him, nor laugh at him, nor pity him with irritating compassion, nor call him "poor Cis" to his face, as if he were an inferior being. She sat and gazed at him in speechless worship, or spoke to him, in low timid tones, of her daily life, and cast adoring respectful looks at him when he talked to her or gave her advice, in a manner which no young fellow could possibly fail to find excessively flattering; he was grateful to her for her devotion, and began in return to pay her many little attentions. He brought her flowers and poetry books, and copied out music for her; once or twice he called at the house in the morning and found her at home; and having one day met her accidentally in the street, on her way to give a music lesson to two little girls, where she went three times a week, Master Cis carefully ascertained the exact route which she invariably followed on her way thither, and then found that, by some extraordinary coincidence, he was always turning up at unexpected corners of the street just at the moment when the little quietly-dressed music teacher appeared in sight.

Gretchen began to confide her little trou-

bles and experiences to this kind-mannered young gentleman.

She told him that her father was not very kind to her, and that she was not at all happy in her home. Her mother, she said, had been a real lady—an English girl, who had run away with her father from the school at which he had been music teacher. As long as her mother lived, although she was a very unhappy woman, in very bad health, little Gretchen had been still not altogether uncared-for and unloved; but since her death the poor child had had but a troublous life of it with her father. From what she had told him, Cis gathered that Herr Rudenbach, although he spoke kindly to his daughter before others, was rough and harsh to her when they were alone. He was avaricious and greedy of gain, looking upon his child and her talent for music solely as a means whereby he might make money out of her, of which he gave her hardly enough to clothe herself; whilst he himself spent every farthing that he could lay hands on upon his own selfish and not very respectable pleasures.

Gretchen also confided to Cis that David Anderson was anxious to marry her, and owned to him that, although she did not care for him in the least, she was half ready to do so in order to escape from the unhappiness which she endured at home.

But here Cis became quite eloquent in his remonstrances and admonitions. It was, he declared, the greatest sin a woman could be guilty of to marry a man she did not love. How could she possibly hope for a blessing on a union entered into from so unhallowed a motive? She must not dream of marrying David Anderson—it would be an absolute wickedness! She must promise him solemnly never to consent to become the wife of a man she did not love, and who was so utterly unsuited to her as honest David.

And Gretchen tearfully, timidly and blushing gave the required promise; and Heaven knows what wild impossible hopes dawned in the poor child's heart as she did so!

Cecil Travers was doing her a dreadful and incalculable injury. He was not in the smallest degree in love with her. Was he not as much in love with Juliet as it was possible for a man to be? He did not want little Gretchen for himself, but he did distinctly object to David Anderson having her. Men are very frequently found to re-

semble closely the typical dog in the manger. And women are very slow to see this; they cannot understand a man being full of jealous objections to another man from any motive save one. Gretchen fancied (and who shall say she was to blame?) that because Cis was hotly, unreasonably indignant against David Anderson for wanting to marry her, therefore he must necessarily be desirous of doing so himself—whereas, as we know very well, nothing was further from Cis Travers's thoughts than such a misalliance.

David Anderson, although he had been educated at the same country-town school where Cis Travers had been sent for two years before going to Eton, was not exactly in the same rank of life as our young friend. He was the son of a worthy and respectable Glasgow merchant, who had given him a fairly good education, and had got him a junior partnership in a young but rising firm in the city, dealing in hemp and flax. It was a splendid opening for young Anderson; for although his share of the profits was at present exceedingly small, in the course of a few years they would probably be much enlarged, and he would be in receipt of a very good income.

There was nothing in the world to prevent his marrying Gretchen Rudenbach, if he felt so disposed. His old parents were homely simple-hearted people, who had no other wish than for their David's happiness; and they would have welcomed such a sweet gentle-mannered girl as she was with delight and affection. And David would have made her an excellent husband; but, alas for her! there came between herself and this rough but honest red-bearded suitor the vision of a tall, pale, gentleman-like youth, with blue eyes and yellow locks, who met her in her daily walks, who gave her paternal advice coupled with fraternal sympathy, and who, by occasionally pressing her hand sentimentally and looking at her tenderly, completely turned the head of the simple-natured little maiden.

One day, as the two were sauntering together down Wigmore Street, they came suddenly upon Wattie Ellison, who only nodded to them as he passed, but who looked back at them rather curiously after they had gone by.

"What can Cis Travers be walking about with little Gretchen for, I wonder?" he muttered to himself, as he walked on; and

Wattie came to the conclusion that Cis must be taken to task on this matter.

CHAPTER XI.

GRETCHEN GETS INTO TROUBLE.

WATTIE ELLISON'S rooms in the Temple do not, as it will be imagined, belong to himself. They are the property of a well-to-do bachelor friend, who seldom visits them, and who lends them to Wattie whenever he cares to come and occupy them. Wattie is one of those lucky men who always fall on their legs in these matters. He has friends by the score: friends with moors in Scotland, friends with fishing in Norway, friends with shooting in Norfolk, and friends to give him mounts in "the shires;" and one and all of these friends are ready and anxious to welcome him and to give him of their best, whenever he may feel inclined to come to them.

And so, amongst others, he has of course a friend who has nice airy rooms, conveniently situated in the Temple, and who is only too delighted to place them at Wattie's disposal.

Wattie, who has been reading for the bar ever since he reached man's estate, comes to these pleasant chambers occasionally, by fits and starts, as it were, whenever a sudden fit of industry is upon him, takes possession of his friend's household gods, gives pleasantly-spoken orders with a smile on his handsome face to his friend's old man and woman, who are left in charge, and who are ready to work their old fingers to the bone in the service of such a winsome-mannered, liberal-handed young gentleman; and, taking down his friend's musty law-books from their shelves, sets to work with a will, and burns the midnight oil in the study thereof.

And accordingly, when his utter rejection by Georgie Travers's father drove him in honor from the neighborhood in which she lived, Wattie thought he would go up to London and toil at the law-books again. He had romantic ideas of remaining buried in hard study for several years, and then of bursting out suddenly into a Coleridge or a Cairns, when, having realized a large fortune and been raised to the top of his profession by his perseverance and genius, he would go down triumphantly to Broadley, and claim Georgie for his wife.

He set to work very hard indeed; for the

first week he made himself almost ill by the ardor and energy which he threw into his labors. For the first week—after that, he began to find it rather monotonous. It occurred to him that, as he had a good deal of talent for painting, the fine arts might possibly open out a quicker road to fortune and fame than the bar could do. At all events, the study would be pleasanter and more attractive in every way. Accordingly, the law-books were replaced on their shelves, and the friend's rooms were quickly transformed into a studio. If, argued Wattie, he were suddenly to present to the world a striking and original picture, full of genius and talent, would not his fortune be as good as made? Why condemn himself to years of dry and uninteresting study, when possibly a few months of much more congenial work might place him on "the line" on the Royal Academy walls, and lead him at once to a comfortable income and to Georgie Travers? And, even supposing he should not succeed, and his picture be a failure, why, then, he could always go back to the law-books; for, after all, a few months more or less would not make much difference in the long run.

It was just at this stage of his proceedings that he stumbled across Cis Travers in Blandford Street.

Wattie Ellison was exceedingly cordial to Cis; he had never taken very much notice of him when they were both down in the country together, but here up in London they met like old friends.

Georgie's brother was a person whom Wattie Ellison could not fail to find exceedingly interesting to him. When Cis sat in his friend's rooms writing to his sister, Wattie, without actually sending her any direct message, would suggest little allusions to himself, and give bits of information, or make little skillful inquiries, which Cis would duly report as he wrote.

"Wattie says he is going to do such and such things," or "Wattie has been asking me how your new mare goes, and what you have been doing this week," and so on; and then, when Georgie's answers came, you may be sure that all these little remarks were noticed and commented upon, and that the letter was as freely read by Wattie as by her brother.

Cis was fond of Georgie, for she had always been good to him, and protected him from his father, and he was glad to do a

good turn for her. Moreover, he became very fond of Wattie Ellison, and the two young men frequently spent their evenings chatting together in those pleasant Temple chambers, whilst Wattie, with a bit of charcoal, sketched out numberless rough designs for his great picture on a white board upon an easel hard by, and then asked Cecil's advice upon them. Cecil invariably said of each that it was very nice; and then Wattie shook his head and said it did not please him yet, rubbed it all out, and began it over again.

The same evening of the day when Wattie had met Cis and Gretchen walking together in Wigmore Street, the two young men were as usual sitting together over the fire in the Temple rooms, when Wattie said, rather suddenly:

"Do you intend playing Faust to our little friend Gretchen, Cis?"

"Eh, what? What on earth do you mean?" said Cis, getting rather red.

"Don't you think it rather a pity to walk about with the child? And I saw you buying those flowers for her the other day at Covent Garden. She is an innocent little soul; one wouldn't wish her to get into any trouble."

"There's no question of any Faust, as far as I am concerned, I assure you," said Cecil, earnestly, leaning forward in his chair and staring into the fire. "Why, you can't think so for one moment!"

"Well, I am glad of it; at the same time she may get fonder of you than is good for her, poor little girl, and it may put ideas into her head and give her hopes."

"Hopes? My dear Wattie, you don't imagine that Gretchen can expect me to marry her?" cried Cis, laughing.

"There's no knowing what a woman wont expect when a young man begins describing to her his views of marriage, as I heard you doing the other evening," said Wattie.

"O! as to that, you know, one can't allow her to throw herself away upon a boor like David Anderson, and I was giving her a little advice."

"Why should she not marry David? he would make her an excellent husband," replied his friend.

"My dear Wattie, what a sin it would be! Such a pretty, refined, gentle little thing to be wasted on a great rough fellow like that!"

"It would be a very good match for her. I don't see where she would get a better," persisted Wattie.

"Good heavens! how can you suggest such an outrageous combination? Beauty and the Beast would be nothing to it!" And Cis began impatiently walking about the room.

At this moment there was a slight scuffle outside the door, and in another instant the stern-visaged old woman who "did for" Mr. Ellison broke in upon the tete-a-tete of the two friends with the information, which she delivered with evident disapproval of such proceedings, that a young woman was wishing to see Mr. Travers.

She was almost immediately followed by a small figure, wrapped in a long black cloak, who, brushing past her into the room, fell at Cis Travers's feet in a passion of hysterical tears.

"Good heavens, Gretchen!" cried Cis. "What on earth is the matter? what has happened? Here, Mrs. Stiles, go and fetch this young lady a glass of sherry." And Wattie helped Cis to raise the sobbing girl and to place her on a chair.

"It is my father!" sobbed the girl. "O Mr. Travers, save me from him! He has beaten me so dreadfully, and he has turned me out of the house. Look here!" And she turned up her sleeve and showed the two horrified young men a sight that made them both shudder.

Her arm, once round, and white, and smooth, was covered with fearful bruises and bleeding wounds, and hung almost helplessly by her side.

"And my back is worse!"

"Good heavens, Gretchen, how dreadful!" exclaimed Wattie Ellison, in great dismay. "What was the reason of it? what made him so brutal to you?"

"Alas! it was because I have lost my situation as music teacher. I am sure I did no wrong, did I, Mr. Travers, by walking with you? But Mrs. Wilkins, the lady whose little girls I was teaching, saw me with you to-day, and she saw me once before, she says; so she came this evening and told my father I was a bad girl, and that she would not have me teach her children any more—and father was dreadfully angry, and beat me and then turned me out of doors; and O, do help me! What shall I do?" she cried, in her agony.

Cecil looked at his friend in blank dis-

may. This was what his mistaken kindness had brought upon her.

"Why on earth did you come here? had you no woman friend to go to?" asked Wattie, almost angrily, of the weeping girl.

"No, no one; and I knew Mr. Travers would take care of me, he is so kind to me. I haven't a friend in the world but you," she added, looking up imploringly at Cecil.

"What shall we do, Cecil? Shall we take her back to old Rudenbach?" asked Wattie, in great perplexity.

"O no, no, no!" cried Gretchen, imploringly. "I can never, never go back to him. If you knew how cruel he is, how often he beats me and kicks me, you would not want me to go back—I would rather beg my way in the streets. But, dear Mr. Travers, may I not stay here?"

She was evidently as innocent as a baby; no idea of any wrong or impropriety in coming alone at ten o'clock at night to throw herself upon the mercy and charity of two young men ever for an instant crossed her mind. Cecil was kind to her, and she loved him devotedly; so in her trouble she had come straight to where she knew he was likely to be found, and, having found him, she trusted herself implicitly to his protection.

No two young men were ever placed in a more awkward predicament. Here was this girl suddenly thrown upon their hands, without a friend in the world but themselves, and common humanity compelled them to take care of her. Cecil, moreover, felt himself responsible for the whole situation. It was his fault that the poor child had got into such a dreadful scrape; it was his foolish sentimental flirtation which had cost her her place and had made her brutal foster turn her out of doors, and Cis felt in a perfect despair of misery and self-reproach as he reflected upon it.

Wattie Ellison forbore to reproach him. Fortunate it was that Mrs. Stiles was on the premises, and the two young men retired to consult with her over what was to be done.

Mrs. Stiles began by being exceedingly stiff and virtuous. She had never heard of such proceedings, she said, as a young woman coming alone to a gentleman's chambers in the middle of the night; she didn't know how she, Mrs. Stiles, a respectable woman, could mix herself up at all in such doings—with sundry other cutting remarks of the same nature; but when the whole of

Gretchen's story had been circumstantially related to her, and when she had seen the poor girl's maimed and bruised condition, feelings of humanity and charity awoke in her ancient bosom; and old Stiles, coming in at this juncture, proved a valuable ally, and suggested several useful and practical ideas.

Between the four it was settled that Mrs. Stiles should carry off Gretchen in a cab to the house of a cousin of her own—a certain Mrs. Blogg, who kept a small baker's shop in a street leading out of the Strand, and who, "for a consideration," which Cecil Travers eagerly offered to make as liberal as could be desired, would, she thought, take in Gretchen for a few days, until it could be further decided what to do for her.

This idea was immediately carried out. Poor little Gretchen, much bewildered and rather reluctant, was carried off by the stern but by no means unkind old woman. Cis wanted to go with them; but Wattie, who had more sense and more knowledge of the world, would not allow him to do so. Mrs. Blogg, a fat shrewd-faced woman, with a sharp eye to the main chance, fingered the installment of two sovereigns sent by Cis with greedy joy, and consented as a favor to take in the young woman.

And between them both the poor girl was put to bed.

But when Cis went the next morning to inquire after his protegee, he found that Mrs. Blogg had in much alarm sent for the nearest doctor, as Gretchen had awakened in high fever and was quite light-headed.

For nearly a fortnight the poor child lay in raging fever and burning thirst between life and death, and then her youth asserted itself and the disease left her, to live, but O! so weak and pale, such a poor little shadow of her former self, as made even the heart of the hired nurse whom Cecil had engaged to tend her ache with pity at the sight.

Meanwhile our two friends had not been idle in her service. They had, in the first place, repaired to Blandford Street, there to find that the wretched old German music teacher had departed and utterly vanished, leaving no direction behind him nor clue as to where he was to be found.

"And a good job, too!" said his indignant landlady; "although he do owe me for five weeks' rent, and for three pounds ten as he borrowed of me just the day be-

fore he went; but a more respectable drinking beast never came into an honest woman's house; and I am glad he's gone, even though I've lost the money. I am right down sorry for the poor young lady, that I am; and if I'd been at home he shouldn't have turned her into the streets; but then I was out, and never knew nothing about it till I got home, an hour after, and found that furrin beast lying dead drunk on the landing."

No more information being obtainable in this quarter, the two friends began seriously to discuss what should be done with poor Gretchen.

Cis Travers's funds were getting low, and he hardly knew how he should be able to go on supporting the girl if she were to be ill much longer.

Driven at last to desperation, he wrote to his father, and, vaguely stating that he had got into a little difficulty in which his honor was concerned, besought him to ask him no questions, but to send him a check for fifty pounds at once.

The squire was delighted with this letter from his son. It so happened that there had been a Newmarket meeting the previous week; and the sport-loving old man settled it in his own mind at once that Cis had been lured into making some imprudent bets, for which this sudden and mysterious demand for money was to pay. Any iniquity connected with horses and horse-racing was pardonable in the old man's eyes. He was positively enchanted.

"The boy is coming round at last!" he said to himself, with a chuckle; "I shall make something of him yet; that sending him to London by himself was a fine idea!"

And when Georgie came into his room, he said to her, with quite a beaming face:

"Cis wants money; he has been getting into trouble; he has been to Newmarket and lost his money, the young rascal!"

"To Newmarket!" repeated Georgie, in amazement. "Are you sure, papa?" For Cis had corresponded pretty regularly with his sister of late, and certainly there had been nothing in his letters to lead her to suppose that horse-racing had in any way formed part of his pleasures.

"I tell you he has been to Newmarket," repeated the squire, doggedly; for he was determined to believe it. And he turned the key of his cash-box and took out his check-book, filled up a check for seventy

pounds, and sat down and wrote a mild exordium to his son on the evils of betting if you backed the wrong horse, which letter considerably surprised and puzzled that young gentleman when he received it.

Georgie had her own opinions on the subject of what the money was wanted for, but she did not think it necessary to impart them to her father. She pulled old Chanticleer's ear, and the ancient hound winked his one eye gravely at her, as much as to say, "We know better, don't we?"

"So we do, old boy!" said Georgie, in answer, half aloud; and left the squire to his own delusions and to his letter.

But, although Cecil could make neither head nor tail of his father's letter, the meaning of his father's check was clear and very delightful, for with it he could do everything he wished for poor little Gretchen.

He and Wattie soon hit upon a plan for her. There was an old governess whom Wattie knew, who had once lived with the Ellisons, and who had now settled down in a little house in Pimlico, where she thankfully took in lodgers to eke out her small income.

This lady, Miss Pinkin by name, would, they soon found out, gladly receive Gretchen Rudenbach when she was well enough to leave Mrs. Blogg's not very comfortable mansion. Cecil was to pay for her lodgings and for the hire of a cottage piano for her use until she was well enough to begin her teaching again. Miss Pinkin's educational connection enabled her to ensure at least two or three young pupils for the girl at once, and in time she would, they hoped, get many more.

Gretchen, on being consulted, thankfully and meekly acquiesced in anything and everything that Cis had settled for her; and when she was well enough to be moved she took up her abode in Miss Pinkin's upper-floor rooms, and under that lady's care soon became strong enough to begin her work.

Cis took Wattie's advice, and went but very seldom to visit his little protegee. The poor child was very sad. She sat and watched for him day after day at her window, and when day after day passed, and he did not come, she wept miserable tears in her loneliness. Now and then, once perhaps in a fortnight, he did come and see her, and then Gretchen became a transformed being; her pale face was suffused

with a blush of delight as he entered, her heavy eyes became bright with happiness, and her gratitude and love for her young benefactor beamed out in every look and word.

But Cis was very prudent, and was determined not to put himself again in the wrong concerning her; only it did annoy him considerably to hear that David Anderson had tracked her to her new abode, and was constantly visiting her and repeatedly urging her to become his wife.

He might have made himself quite at ease concerning this. Gretchen was in no danger of becoming Mrs. David Anderson.

"I do not think about him," she would say to Miss Pinkin, when that good lady urged her not to turn a deaf ear to so advantageous an offer.

"But you do think about Mr. Travers, I am afraid, Gretchen," the ex-governess would say severely, "although he is far above you in station, and is not likely to think about you."

And to this accusation Gretchen could give no answer whatever.

CHAPTER XII.

REJECTED AND LEFT.

WITH her feet on the fender, the last new novel on her lap, and her eyes fixed on the fire, Juliet Blair is sitting one evening in the twilight in the little morning-room to which she is accustomed to resort for her five o'clock tea.

It so happens that an emissary from Madame Celeste in Bond Street, armed with cardboard boxes of every size and shape, has with much commotion arrived half-an-hour ago at the house, having come down from London by the afternoon express with an entirely new selection of Parisian bonnets, hats and headdresses, for inspection.

Mrs. Blair, who would barter her soul away for a French bonnet, has retired with Ernestine to her bedroom to unpack and look over all these treasures, and it is possible that Colonel Fleming is not altogether unaware of these arrangements, nor of the superior attraction which retains the widow up stairs.

For he shortly afterwards steals into the morning-room and, drawing a chair in front of the fire, sits down by the side of his ward.

Juliet makes room for him with a smile,

and then for several minutes neither of them speak.

"I have been doing a very unpleasant duty this afternoon," says Colonel Fleming, at last.

"Yes?" from Juliet, inquiringly.

"I have sent off a letter that I have too long delayed writing. I have written to secure my return passage to India in the 'Sultana,' which is advertised to sail in a fortnight."

"What?" Juliet starts to her feet. "To India—are you mad! What have you done? The letters are not gone!" and she makes a step to the door.

He puts out his hand to stop her. "I am afraid they are, Juliet; the bag was just going as I came in; but even if they were not, it could make no difference. I have quite made up my mind that it is high time I went back."

"Surely this is a very sudden determination you have come to," said Juliet, trying to speak calmly.

"Not at all; I have been thinking of it for some time," he answered; "only it was no use talking about it until I had made up my mind to go; and now the deed is done," he added, with a half sigh.

"I do not see that the mischief is in any way irremediable," she answers, speaking quickly. "It is easy to write to-morrow, and retract your letter of to-day. Colonel Fleming, I entreat you to think better of it; we cannot let you leave us like this, indeed we cannot!"

"You are very good," he begins, rather formally; "but I have not acted without due thought, I assure you."

And then all her self-control forsakes her, and she bursts into a wall of despair, clasping her hands entreatingly—"O! why, why should you go? are you not happy here?"

"Yes, I am happy—too happy, perhaps," answers Hugh, gloomily; "but one doesn't live for happiness, unfortunately. I have quite finished all that I came home to do for you, Juliet; and now I am only wasting my time and my life here."

"But why need you ever go back? Why not throw up your Indian appointment, and stay at home?" she asks, despairingly.

Colonel Fleming smiles. "I don't quite see my way to that, Juliet. I am not likely to get anything else so good at home, or indeed anything at all, good or bad; all my interest is in India, and this appointment of

mine is a very good one. You forget that I am a poor man. I should not have enough of my own to live like a gentleman in England."

Juliet was leaning up against the mantel-piece with her arms folded upon it, and her head bent down upon them. He could not see her face—the firelight flickered red and warm over her dusky head and bowed figure; something in the utter despair of her attitude touched him strangely.

As he finished speaking, she raised herself abruptly and began walking rapidly up and down the room behind him.

"You must not go, you shall not go!" she kept on saying aloud. He would not look round at her, perhaps because he could not trust himself to do so. He sat leaning forward on his chair and staring fixedly into the fire.

Then all at once she came and stood behind him; her heart beat so that she could hardly stand; her voice trembled so that she could scarcely speak; her very hands, which she laid one on each of his shoulders, shook as they rested there.

There was no light in the room but the firelight, and they could not see each other's faces.

"Hugh! don't go. Why should you go? Have I not enough for us both? Stay and share everything that I have—dear Hugh!"

And to her trembling words there succeeded an utter silence in the little room.

Why had she not worded it otherwise? why had she not said, "I love you; stay for my sake, because I cannot live without you."

Then, indeed, he could hardly have withstood her; then, indeed, for her sake as well as for his own, he must have taken her to his heart at once and forever. But a something of maiden bashfulness and reserve, even in that moment of impulse, when in her despair she had let him see too much perchance of what was in her heart, had kept her back from the actual confession of her love.

She had spoken of her money! Ah, fatal, miserable mistake! She had brought up before him the one thing that in his own mind stood as an insuperable barrier between them, the one thing that for honor's sake bade him hold back and leave her.

Rapidly there flashed through his mind the utter impossibility of what she had asked him to do—"to stay and share all that was hers!" How could he do so? how could he,

her guardian, place himself in the utterly false position of her lover?

Still he did not speak. Ah, will no good angel prompt her to fall at his feet and to cry, "I love you!"

The opportunity is gone. Hugh turns round, and takes her hands—gentle hands, that were still on his shoulders.

"My dear Juliet"—and his voice betrays some unwonted emotion—"you are, I think, the most generous-minded woman I ever met—but—"

"Ah, say no more! say no more!" she cries, wrenching away her hands from his grasp and burying her face in them.

"Do you not recollect, my child," he says, very gently and tenderly, "do you not recollect that I am your guardian, and you my ward? In such a position, that I should accept any gift or loan of money from you is utterly impossible."

He had willfully misinterpreted her meaning! With bitterest shame she saw that he misunderstood her purposely—that he spoke of her money where she had meant herself! Was ever woman subjected to such soul-degrading humiliation?

She, Juliet Blair the heiress, the owner of Sotherne, young, beautiful and talented, had made a free offer of herself to this man whom she had been weak enough to love. She had offered herself—and—had been rejected!

With flashing eyes and burning cheeks she turned upon him.

"Say no more, pray, Colonel Fleming. I am truly sorry that I should have offended you by offering to lend you money. As you say, I should have remembered that between you and me such a transaction was impossible. Pray forgive me, and rest assured that I shall be very careful not to offend you again by the repetition of such a proposition."

Her voice was full of scorn, and as she ceased speaking she made him a sweeping bow and left the room; and, hurrying up stairs into her own bedroom, she flung herself down upon the sofa and burst into a fit of passionate tears.

Bitter tears of anger and self-reproach over her own abased pride and mortified self-esteem! What demon had prompted her to speak those miserable words? Why had she committed the fatal, irretrievable error of wooing instead of waiting to be wooed? And the worst of it was that it was

all a mistake! She had thought herself loved, and she had been awakened rudely to find herself scorned and rejected! For that he had really misunderstood her she could not for one instant delude herself into believing. In his pity and his compassion he had answered her about her money, feigning to ignore her true meaning—which, alas, she had all too plainly betrayed!

To any woman the position would have been a sufficiently painful one; but to Juliet Blair, with her proud spirit and independence of inind, such thoughts were absolute torture.

There was no untruth in the statement which she made to her maid, when that functionary entered her mistress's room to put out her dress for dinner, that she had such a frightful headache that she felt quite unequal to going down stairs again, and that she would have a cup of tea in her room and then go to bed.

But when this message was brought down stairs to the two who were awaiting her appearance to go in to dinner, Colonel Fleming offered his arm in silence to the widow, and became very grave and silent indeed.

Not all Mrs. Blair's blandishments, backed up with an entirely new headdress just come from town, could extract from her companion more than the most absent monosyllables.

When it came to the mistress of the house being forced to keep her room because of his presence—for it was thus that he interpreted her absence—Colonel Fleming felt that something must be done. Sotherne Court was no longer a fitting abode for him.

After dinner was over, he studied Bradshaw attentively for some minutes, and then, going into the library, rang the bell for Higgs.

"Higgs, can I have the dog-cart to-morrow morning to meet the eight o'clock train?"

"Yes, certainly, sir."

"Very well, then; will you send James to my room to pack my things? I find that I am obliged to go up to town rather suddenly to-morrow."

"Yes sir—sorry you are obliged to go, sir; we all hoped you would have stayed," said the old man, lingering for a minute to poke the fire and sweep up the hearth. "I'll send James at once, sir."

And Higgs went his way to the back region, where, to the select community in the

housekeeper's room, he gave it as his opinion that Miss Juliet had "given the colonel the sack; and more's the pity, says I, for a nicer, pleasanter-spoken gentleman than Colonel Fleming never stopped in the 'ouse!"

Colonel Fleming and James the footman were busy packing up for the best part of the night.

"He'll never come back no more," said James to his superior, when at last he was dismissed; "he's packed up every stick and every straw; he's not coming back no more, Mr. Higgs."

It did not behove Higgs to lower his dignity by confiding to one of the under servants his views of the part which he supposed Miss Blair to have played in this sudden departure. He contented himself with gruffly desiring James to "clean up that there mess, and to go to bed and be quite sure he called the colonel in plenty of time the next morning;" an injunction which James, mindful of parting tips, was not at all likely to forget.

When Juliet awoke at eight o'clock the next morning, her maid stood by her bedside with a cup of tea, and on the tray lay a small sealed note.

"Colonel Fleming desired me to give you this note, miss, before he went."

"Before he went! is he gone?"

With what a sudden faint sinking of the heart she asked the question! but how foolish! Of course he had only gone up to town for the day.

The maid, perfectly unconscious of her mistress's agitation, said cheerfully that, yes, the colonel was gone, and that she had heard Mr. Higgs say he had started in plenty of time, and was sure to have caught the train.

Juliet waited feverishly until the girl had left the room, and then tore open the note. It ran thus:

"Forgive me for leaving you so suddenly without a word of farewell or thanks for all your hospitality and goodness towards me; but you will not, I know, think me ungrateful. After all that has passed between us, I do not think I could have stayed any longer under your roof, and I have thought it best to leave you thus without the spoken farewell that must have been full of pain to us both. God bless and reward you, dear Juliet, for all your generosity and affection towards me. I can never forget either; and,

if ever you think of me in future years, do me at least the justice to believe that it is not inclination, but duty and honor alone, which have told me to leave you.

"I do not know where I shall stay in town, but I will write to you again before I leave England."

Mrs. Blair and Ernestine were as yet deep in the mysteries of rouge and crimping-irons, when, preceded by a short sharp knock, the door was flung open, and Juliet entered hurriedly, with an open letter in her hand.

"My dearest Juliet!" cried the widow, hastily flinging a dressing-cape over the small collection of pots, and phials, and camel's-hair brushes that stood on the table near her—"how you startled me! What on earth is the matter?"

"Did you know that Colonel Fleming was going away this morning?" asks Juliet, shortly.

"Going away? No, certainly not; has he gone?" answers Mrs. Blair, with an astonishment too real to be feigned.

"Yes, I have just had this note from him to say he is gone; and I don't know if you are aware of it, but he starts for India in a fortnight."

"No, indeed; I had no idea of it. So he is gone! very rude of him, I must say, to go without wishing us good-by." Mrs. Blair has some difficulty in concealing the satisfaction she feels at this unexpected news.

"Not rude at all; he is suddenly called away—it is perfectly natural. Of course he could not wake us all up at so early an hour," answers Juliet.

"What does he say? Let me see the letter," says her stepmother, stretching out her hand for the note; but Juliet does not dream of giving it to her.

"There is nothing in it that would interest you," she says, folding it up slowly and replacing it in its envelop. "Besides, he says he will write again from town."

"Ah, he will write again?"

"Yes, so he says."

"Then perhaps, Juliet, you will leave me to finish my dressing, as there is nothing very serious the matter, and it upsets my nerves to be obliged to talk so early in the morning. Go on with my hair, Ernestine."

And Juliet goes.

Somehow that promise that he will write again prevents her from despairing.

That letter, she thinks, will in some way make up to her for all the suspense and un-

certainty of the present. It is impossible that he can intend to leave her like that for years, perhaps indeed forever. Vaguely, indistinctly, as women see such things, she begins to see the duty and the honor by which he has said he considers himself bound; but, womanlike, she does not think very seriously of them. He has not at the same time more than implied that his inclination would lead him to stay with her? Do not such words mean that he loves her? And if so, then what need she fear?

What does a woman care for duty or for honor when set in the balance against love? Love in her mind outweighs everything; give her love, and she laughs at every other earthly consideration. To Juliet, with her impulsive enthusiastic mind, and her passionate temperament, it seemed impossible that so cold-blooded a thing as honor could in any man's mind win the day against love.

He would come back to her, she said to herself; he would not be able to stay away; a few days of waiting, and then he would come back to her, as he had come back before, sooner even than she had dared to hope for him.

She read his letter over and over again, she pressed it gladly to her heart and her lips, for she could not, possibly she would not, see in it a farewell.

And Hugh Fleming up in London is pacing objectlessly up and down Piccadilly and Pall Mall, wondering what he shall say to her, and feeling more and more angry with himself for having left her, and more and more inclined to go back to her by the next train.

Curiously enough, he does not feel at all sure that Juliet does indeed love him. Even her last interview with him, when she had of her own accord offered him everything, had but partially opened his eyes. He knows her to be impulsive and impetuous, and generous to a fault. What more likely than that such a woman, fond of him as she undoubtedly was, should in a moment of exaltation be carried away into offering more than she intended or realized?

Should he be right or justified in taking advantage of that moment of weakness?

Had he known how completely and utterly the girl's heart was given over to him, he would certainly never have left her; but he did not know it—he knew, indeed, that if he chose he might win her, but he did not understand that she was already won.

He wandered about the streets, trying to settle in his own mind how he should write to her—or whether, indeed, he should write to her at all; and at last he decided to give himself one more chance of happiness.

He turned into the club, and sat down and wrote to her. He begged her to tell him truly if indeed what she had said to him had been the voice of her own heart—or merely an impulse of generosity; he told her that he loved her passionately, entirely, devotedly, with a love that he never thought to feel again after the death of his first love, and which she, Juliet, alone had had power to waken in him. But he told her at the same time that every feeling of honor, of duty and of delicacy bade him leave her; that her money stood between them like a wall; and that, moreover, his own peculiar position as her guardian made it almost a breach of trust to the dead that he should aspire to be her lover. One consideration alone, he said, could surmount these objections—the consideration of her happiness. If, indeed, she loved him so entirely that without him she could not live, nor be happy, then, indeed, and then only, would he throw all these most weighty objections to the winds, and devote his whole existence to her. And in this case he entreated her to write to him at once and recall him to her side; but if it was not so, if it was merely a grateful affection, a generous friendship, or even but a brief-lived fancy, which had made her for one short hour imagine that she loved him—in that case he prayed her to put his letter into the fire, and to send him no answer whatever, to it; he should know too well how to interpret her silence. He concluded his letter by naming to her the very latest date at which he could receive an answer from her in town before starting for Southampton, and by telling her that up to the very last minute he should still not despair, but hope to hear from her.

Even when he had directed and stamped this letter, Colonel Fleming did not immediately post it. He was still so doubtful about the wisdom and the propriety of writing to her at all that he walked about with the letter in his pocket the whole of the next day. It was only on the third day that, having, I think, previously tossed up a sovereign, drawn lots from a number of blank slips of paper for one marked slip, and made use of sundry other most childish and

undignified tricks of chance, in every one of which the luck came to the same decision, he finally determined to send the letter, and, going out with it on purpose, dropped it himself into the pillar-post.

And then he waited—at first confidently and patiently—then, after a day or two, less confidently, but still patiently—then with restless impatience, and finally, as the days slipped away one after the other, and the posts came in in regular succession, and brought him many others, but never the one letter he looked for—finally his waiting became despair.

The last day of his stay in England dawned. He was obliged to go about his business to a few shops and to his banker's—but all day long he kept returning to his hotel to ask feverishly if there were no letters for him, to receive ever the same answer—none.

Then late in the afternoon he went to see a friend whom he could trust, and charged him solemnly to go the last thing at night, and again the first thing in the morning, to his hotel, after he had left, and if he found there any letter for him with a certain postmark, to telegraph to him on board the 'Sultana,' at the Southampton Docks, to stop his starting.

The friend promised faithfully—and then he could do nothing more, and he was obliged to go down to Southampton. To the last he would not give up hope; he watched and watched all that night and all the next morning from the vessel's side, long after he had gone on board, for anything in the shape of a telegraph boy; and he would not have his things taken into his cabin, nor settle even that he was going, until the very last.

And then all at once the anchor was raised, and it was too late.

And as the good ship "Sultana" steamed slowly over the gray waves of Southampton Water in the early morning, and stood out to sea in a light and favorable wind, Colonel Hugh Fleming beneath his breath cursed his native land, and Sotheby Court, and Juliet Blair, with deep and bitter curses.

"She does not know how to love—she could not stand the test. Her pride has ruined us both!"

And he turned his back on the white shores of the old country, and set his face fixedly and determinedly towards that far Eastern land to which he was bound.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

THE HEIRESS AND HER GUARDIAN

A TALE OF ENGLISH COUNTRY LIFE.

BY MRS. H. LOVETT CAMERON.

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE SOTHERNE LETTER-BAG.

"ERNESTINE," said Mrs. Blair, to that talented damsel, during the course of the same day that Colonel Fleming had so suddenly left Sotherne Court—"Ernestine, you are looking very pale."

"Thank you, madame, my health is quite good."

"That makes no difference," persisted her mistress. "You are looking very pale, and I am not at all easy about you."

Here Mademoiselle Ernestine's gifted nature asserted itself, and she perceived that it was her duty to be pale and ailing.

"Out, madame, perhaps I am a little souffrante; I have had some aches in my head."

"Exactly so, Ernestine; and it is plain that you do not get enough fresh air; you want exercise, my good girl—a walk every day."

"Madame is very kind—but I have not much time for a promenade."

"Not during the day, perhaps; and that brings me to what I wish to say: I should like you to take a good brisk walk in the morning before you call me."

"Madame!" exclaimed poor Ernestine, with rather a blank face at the prospect of an earlier rise from her much-loved bed.

"Don't interrupt me; it is dull I know for you to walk out so early without any companion or any object, but you might go along the high road; it is always dry that way; and then when you meet the postman you can come back, and if you like to take the bag from him, and bring it to me, to take my letters out, it will give you some little interest to go out for—and, Ernestine, you are a good girl, and I am very pleased with you. Look here! I have put out that black silk mantle of mine for you; it will make you a nice jacket, and there is a bit of real lace on it, which I will give you too."

"How very amiable you are towards me,

madame!" exclaimed the delighted maiden, as she took up the silk mantle.

"I am quite sure that an early walk will do you all the good in the world; there is nothing like the morning air."

"Thank you, madame; and shall I begin to-morrow?"

"Certainly, I should like to see some roses in your cheeks as soon as possible. Here, put some scent on this handkerchief, and give me my gold eyeglass—that is all I want just at present; you may go now."

Ernestine fully comprehended what was required of her. She carried off the silk mantle, which was almost new, and a very handsome present to give to a maid, and prepared herself honestly to fulfil her part of the bargain.

She understood that Mrs. Blair wished to have the first sight of the letter-bag; and she probably guessed that it was her object to find out whether Miss Blair received any letters from the departed Colonel Fleming. Further than that, to do her justice, Ernestine's suspicions did not go.

It was the custom at Sotherne for the letters to be left at the lodge-gate about eight o'clock in the morning, by the walking postman, whence they were daily fetched by James the footman. Higgs the butler was supposed to keep the key; and when the letter-bag arrived, it was his duty to open it, and distribute the servants' letters to them, and then to lay the rest on the dining-room sideboard, save only Mrs. Blair's, which Ernestine always carried off to her mistress's room.

But Higgs, like many other good servants who have been long in their master's confidence, was rather spoilt and lazy; he was fond of shirking as many of his lesser duties as he found he could, without detriment to his own dignity or his mistress's interests, hand over to the rather meek-spirited footman. Amongst other little duties, that of opening the postbag, and distributing its contents, had of late years been completely entrusted to James.

The bag arrived just when Mr. Higgs was most comfortably enjoying his breakfast and his morning talk with Mrs. Pearse in the housekeeper's room. Higgs was fat, and Higgs was also getting old and lazy; it was therefore considerably easier, simpler, and less troublesome to himself in every way to give up the key to James; and, as he fetched the bag from the lodge, to let him also open it and distribute the letters.

Now, if there was one duty which James hated and detested above all other duties, it was that of fetching the postbag from the lodge. Every morning, wet or dry, fine or foul, he had to trudge out after "them dratted letters," as he elegantly expressed it; and as his own correspondence was of an exceedingly limited and most unexciting nature, being chiefly composed of bills for tobacco and beer from the village public house, and petitions for money from a drunken old mother whom filial duty commanded him to support, he was not very much interested in its contents.

These sentiments, being freely spoken and concisely expressed pretty frequently before his fellow-servants, were well known to Mrs. Blair's French maid.

She also knew—for trust a woman, above all a Frenchwoman, to discover such matters—that James was consumed with an absorbing passion for herself. Acting upon the knowledge of these two facts, Ernestine set to work to make an unconscious instrument of her admirer.

"Monsieur Jams," she said to him, with her sweetest smile, "do you not dislike very much to fetch the bag with the letters?"

"Ay, that I do, mam'zell," answered her swain, earnestly; "it just takes me off when every one else is beginning their breakfasts, having to fetch them blessed letters; and if there's one thing I can't abear, it's not being able to sit down comfortable to my meals."

"Well, look at this, Jams—I will fetch it for you for a few days."

"You, mam'zell!"

"But yes. I have given a dress to Mrs. White, the woman at the lodge, to make for me, and I wish to go and see how she does it every morning; and if you will give me the key, I will go fetch the bag at the same time."

"The key!" repeated James, rather dubiously; "well, I don't know about that—

I don't know as I ought to give you the key."

"O yes, give me the key, for I expect a letter from a friend in Paris—what you call a lovere; but he is dying," she added, quickly, seeing that James looked as firm as adamant at the mention of a rival.

"Ah, he's dying! Are you sure of that?" he said, with a gleam on his face at the melancholy news.

"But yes, he dies, and perhaps he leaves me some money."

"Ah, ah!" with a delighted grin.

"Yes; and if he do, I can perhaps marry myself to one—whom I love much better." And here Mademoiselle Ernestine glanced at her admirer with a most telling *cillade*, and then looked coyly down at the corner of her apron. "So you see, Monsieur Jams, I am in impatience to see the letters; so please give me the key."

"You mustn't let out to Higgs, then," said the enraptured footman, clasping his beloved's hands, "and you must give me a kiss."

"If you give me the key," said Ernestine, who had been prepared to use bribery and corruption.

The kiss was submitted to, and Ernestine walked off triumphantly with the key in her pocket.

"*Qu'ils sont donc betes, ces hommes! Mon Dieu! qu'ils sont niais!*" she muttered to herself, as she went up stairs; and it must be confessed that, as far as James was concerned, she had some cause for her sweeping condemnation of the male sex.

The following morning Ernestine entered Mrs. Blair's bedroom soon after eight o'clock, triumphantly bearing the letter-bag and the key. That she had previously opened it and carefully looked over the contents herself, and then locked it up again, was of course a proceeding to which, under the circumstances, she considered that she had a perfect right, but which she did not think it necessary to impart to her mistress.

Mrs. Blair eagerly turned the key and tumbled out all the letters over the bedclothes.

But there was nothing whatever to reward her curiosity; her own letters were only bills, and there were three for Juliet—one from Mr. Bruce, one from Georgie Travers (an answer probably to an invitation to lunch, which she knew Juliet to have sent her), and the third was either a bill or a

circular; there was certainly nothing from Colonel Fleming. She replaced all the letters, and Ernestine gravely took the bag from her hand, and carried it down stairs to James, who proceeded to distribute the contents as usual, and who was brought to acknowledge that it certainly made no difference who fetched it, and that he had much enjoyed eating his breakfast undisturbed. A second and third morning, Ernestine, undaunted by the wind and the rain, sallied forth wrapped in her waterproof cloak down to the lodge, and still there had been nothing to reward her energy nor to satisfy her mistress's curiosity. But on the fourth day, when the girl brought in the bag, she knew perfectly well, by a previous inspection, that there was a letter from Colonel Fleming to Miss Blair inside it. Mrs. Blair saw it, and pounced upon it the instant she opened the bag; it was impossible to mistake the large bold handwriting with which she was perfectly familiar, even had the crest and monogram on the seal been wanting to make assurance doubly sure.

She hastily slipped the letter under her pillow, waiting till Ernestine's back was turned towards her whilst she was pulling up the blinds and arranging the window curtains, to do so; then taking out her own letters, she gave the bag back into her hand, and sent her away.

The instant she was alone Mrs. Blair sprang out of bed, and, wrapping her dressing-gown around her, carried her prize to the light of the window.

Without a moment's hesitation she broke the seal, unfolded the letter, and began hastily reading through all poor Hugh's passionate love words. She had but just finished it when she heard Ernestine coming along the passage with her hot water. She had only time to tear the letter once across, and throw it hastily on to the fire, when the door opened. The envelop and one torn half fell on to the blazing coals, and were rapidly consumed; but the other half, unseen by Mrs. Blair, fluttered aside, and slipped down behind the coal-scuttle, where it remained between that household article and the wainscot, completely hidden.

"I did not ring," said Mrs. Blair, sharply, to Ernestine, for she was angry at her untimely entrance.

"N'est-ce pas, madame? Ah, I beg pardon, I heard a bell; it must have been Mademoiselle Blair's bell; and I thought it was

yours. Will you wait, madame, or shall I bring you your bath, as the hot water is here?"

Ernestine was not unmindful of the blazing papers on the fire, upon which she kept one eye whilst she spoke. Her entrance, it is needless to say, was not in the very least accidental; but had been, on the contrary, very carefully planned by her from the moment when she had ascertained that the letter for which her mistress was on the lookout had arrived.

She set about her duties of dressing and waiting upon Mrs. Blair with alacrity, and it was whilst bustling actively about the room that she caught sight of a small corner of white paper sticking out behind the coal-scuttle.

When Mrs. Blair had completed her dressing and left the room, Ernestine flew to the coal-scuttle, and triumphantly drew forth the torn half-sheet of Colonel Fleming's letter.

"Ah, mais c'est trop fort!" she muttered, with a slight compunction for Juliet. "I would never have imagined she would have opened it and then burnt it. Ah, but it is shameful to that pauvre demoiselle."

But, in spite of her compunctions, Ernestine did her best to decipher the mutilated letter, although, owing to her imperfect education, and to its fragmentary condition, she was not able to make out as much of it as she would have liked.

"I will keep him! he will be useful to me some day," she said, to herself, as she carefully folded it up and put it in her pocket. Then she carried it up stairs to her own room, and wrapping it in a piece of silver paper, locked it up in a little cedar-wood money-box, side by side with her last quarter's wages, a packet of love-letters, chiefly in French, a withered bunch of violets, given her by Adolphe, her first love, who had gone for a soldier and died in Algeria, and a pair of pearl and gold earrings, her greatest treasures, which, being very handsome, and having been presented to her by a French count, she was afraid to wear openly in the sterner moral atmosphere of an English family.

Meanwhile Juliet was waiting and watching day after day for that very letter, of which one-half lay up stairs in that box in the French lady's-maid's attic bedroom, and the other half was in ashes in Mrs. Blair's fireplace. She was too proud to show her

anxiety; she would not send for the letters to her bedroom, but every day she got up a little sooner, and hurried down stairs to see what the morning's post had brought her, every day to meet with a fresh disappointment.

At first she was so full of hope, that when his letter did not come she hardly made herself unhappy; she felt so sure he would write to her, so certain that he would keep his word. But when day after day passed and brought her no word, no sign from him, her heart began to be very heavy. She read and reread the little note he had written to her before he left, and tried to comfort herself afresh with the assurance of that letter which he had promised to write to her. It was impossible, she said to herself, that he could break his word! But she began to get restless and impatient; she could settle to nothing; all her ordinary occupations and duties became hateful to her; she could take no pleasure in any of them. She began to torment herself with all sorts of horrible conjectures. Could he be ill? she wondered; or, good heavens! had there been any railway accidents the last few days in which he might have been disabled, or possibly worse? and a hundred ghostly fancies and imaginations haunted her from morning till night. ✱

Every day she longed ardently for the next to come, and when the next day dawned, it brought her still nothing—nothing.

Every one knows the miserable suspense of that watching and waiting for news that will not come, that hope deferred which maketh the heart sick. Juliet tried to call pride to her aid; but, although she said to herself, over and over again, that if he did not care, neither would she—that it was unworthy of her to waste tears and sighs on a man who could care for her so little as to leave her so heartlessly, that he could not be worth her love who treated her so cruelly—although she said these things to herself a hundred times a day, she found all such arguments singularly unavailing.

Pride is very little help to a woman who really loves.

And the days slipped away silently, swiftly—uneventful days of misery—whilst she waited in vain for that letter that was never to come, and for the answer to which Hugh Fleming up in London was eating his heart out with longings that were all in vain.

At last there came a day when Juliet and her stepmother sat together in the drawing-room—the girl with her work in her hands and her thoughts far away, and the elder woman reading the Times—and the latter broke the long silence by saying, suddenly:

“Did you not say the ‘Sultana’ was the name of the ship Colonel Fleming was to go to India in, Juliet?”

“Yes; I think that was the name he mentioned,” she answered, rather faintly; “what about her?”

“O nothing,” replied her stepmother, unconcernedly; “only, I see that she has sailed, so I suppose he is gone. By the way, did he ever write to you again?”

No answer. The room seemed to swim around her; a mist was before her eyes; she rose unsteadily, and began mechanically folding up her work. Like one in a nightmare she got herself out of the room, and staggered across the hall towards the staircase, and then one of the housemaids, passing along the corridor above, heard a heavy sound as of some one falling, and uttered a shriek of dismay at seeing her young mistress fall forward in a dead swoon in the hall below.

Her cries of alarm speedily brought assistance, and Juliet was carried up to her own room and laid upon her bed, whilst a groom was immediately sent off by the frightened Higgs to summon Dr. Ramsden to the mistress of Sotherne. But Juliet was ill with a disease which it was beyond good Dr. Ramsden's skill to prescribe for.

When she recovered her senses after that short fainting fit, she came back to a state of misery and wretchedness compared to which the deathlike unconsciousness of her deep swoon had been a merciful condition.

For nearly a fortnight the girl was almost beside herself with grief. She had not known till now how much, in spite of everything, hope had buoyed her up—how impossible, in the bottom of her heart, she had thought it for Hugh to leave her. But now that he was indeed gone utterly beyond recall, an absolute despair took possession of her. She knew him too well to believe he would come back; he was dead to her. She felt—as much dead as if she had seen him in his coffin. In all the world that was before her, there would be no Hugh Fleming; others might fill her life or occupy her thoughts, but never again he who must ever, come what may, be first and dearest

in her heart. Ah, that long blank of years that stretches out hopelessly, grayly, before some of us—how shall we ever live through them! How long life seems to those who miss out of it the one face that can make it all too short!

Juliet Blair had none of those qualities that go to make a heroic nature; she had little reserve or self-control; hers was not the character that could "suffer and be still;" she felt things too intensely, too acutely, for that calm suppression of all outward emotion which is the gift of colder natures. She spent hours locked up in her own room in paroxysms of tears, or sitting dry-eyed staring into the fire with a white, scared, miserable face. She would see no visitors, and could hardly be persuaded to touch any food; and, to all inquiries as to what ailed her, she answered wearily, "I am ill; let me alone—I am ill!"

The sight of her stepmother, who had so calmly and lightly told her of Hugh Fleming's departure, became absolutely hateful to her. Sometimes she wandered about the house, or sat silently for hours alone in the library, in his chair; with her face buried in her hands. One day sitting thus, and leaning her elbows on the writing-table, half unconsciously she pulled open one of the drawers in front of her. Some things of Colonel Fleming's were still left inside: a few unimportant papers, a packet of envelopes stamped with his crest, a little ivory penholder she had often seen him use, and, right in the front, an old pair of dogskin gloves, molded and shaped to the form of his hands as if he had just pulled them off. Juliet's fingers wandered over each and all with a loving touch! and then she remembered how once before she had found his things lying about, in this very room, when he was away, and how she had smoothed them and put them straight for him with reverent hands; only, then he had come back to her—but now, now!—with a wail of despair she burst into a passion of bitter tears.

By-and-by she took out of the drawer all the dear relics of her lover—the gloves, the penholder, the envelopes and papers—and carried them up stairs to her own room, and there, showering passionate kisses on each inanimate object that had been his, she locked them up in her dressing-case, by the side of that short farewell note which was all of his that she could call her own.

And they were a comfort to her. Hitherto she had possessed nothing that had belonged to Hugh Fleming, nor had she one single thing that he had given to her; and Juliet prized these things that she had found as her greatest treasures; for most women are insanely foolish over such relics of those they love.

As the days passed away Juliet Blair gradually recovered her self-possession; as the sorrow sank deeper and deeper into her heart, so it left her outwardly calmer. She wept no more; it would seem, indeed, as if the fountain of her tears had run itself dry.

By degrees she resumed her ordinary occupations; she rode and drove out, and paid visits as she had been accustomed to do; and Mrs. Blair, who had watched her misery with a good many pangs of conscience, and some uneasiness as to the result, breathed freely again, and congratulated herself upon having done quite the wisest and best thing for her stepdaughter's welfare.

"She has quite got over it—very soon she will have forgotten his existence!" she said, to herself.

But there was a change in Juliet which no one around her noticed, because none of those by whom she was surrounded loved her well enough to detect it.

She was altered. The old brightness, the old impatience were almost gone; her cheek was a shade paler, her sweet lips had a sadder droop; her step had lost something of its lightness, her eyes something of their fire; and to the end of her life these things never wholly came back to Juliet Blair.

But Mrs. Blair saw nothing of all this. In her suffering, as in her joy, the girl was alone—utterly alone.

Ernestine had discontinued her morning walks. Two days after the arrival and subsequent destruction of Colonel Fleming's letter, Mrs. Blair remarked to her maid that she looked so much better that there was no longer the necessity for that daily exercise which she had prescribed for her.

So Ernestine gave back the key of the letter-bag to James.

"Here, Monsieur Jams, is your key," she said, shaking her head, mournfully; "*he is dead!*" in allusion to the French lover.

"Dead is he?" cried James, eagerly; "and the money—have you heard?"

"Alas!" said Ernestine, "it is no use, my friend; the perfidious one has left it all to his cousin Annette."

CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT THE BROWN MARE DID.

Soon after the departure of Colonel Fleming on his return voyage to India, a hard frost set in which stopped the hunting for a fortnight.

During this fortnight Squire Travers was intensely miserable; he spent his days in alternately tapping the barometer, and going out to look at the weathercock.

"I think it's half a point to the west of north, Georgie," he would say, excitedly, coming in from these excursions of inspection; "just you come out and see." And Georgie would obediently throw a shawl over her head, and run out into the keen frosty air to stare up at the top of the house.

"Well"—doubtfully—"hardly, papa; and I am afraid the smoke is *very* due north, and that is the safest guide."

"Not at all; the chimneys all want sweeping; that sends the smoke all ways at once. I stick to the weathercock—but you're right; there isn't much sign of its changing yet."

And then the squire would stroll disconsolately round to the stable, and go into every stall, and mutter grievous things below his breath as he gazed sorrowfully at each sleek-coated animal—dire words relative to the process of "eating their heads off"—that strange and mysterious feat which horses are supposed to accomplish in frosty weather.

"D'y'e see any signs of its giving?" he would ask a dozen times of Davis, the stud groom, who followed him about from stall to stall, taking off the clothing from each idle hunter's back.

Davis, who was of a sanguine disposition, would remove the everlasting straw from his mouth, and answer, cheerfully:

"O bless you, yes, squire; it can't last much longer. We shall have rain before night, most likely." And though these enlivening prophecies had not as yet been fulfilled, the squire pinned his faith to Davis, and derived much consolation from his hopeful assurances.

Georgie regretted the frost as well as her

father, but not so keenly as she would once have done. A good deal of the pleasure had gone out of the girl's life since Mr. Travers had so sternly banished Wattie Ellison from her side. She never thought of rebelling against his decision; in the long run she felt sure he was right. But sometimes she found it hard to bear. Her letters from Cis were a great comfort to her; from them she learnt that her lover was well, and that he thought of her, and that he was, as Cis said, "working hard;" and she, too, had her dreams of the fortune which his genius, in which she had unbounded faith, might some day achieve for her sake. Buoyed up by these hopes, she tried to bear her life cheerfully and patiently, and to be the same bright sympathizing companion to her father as she used to be; but it had become an effort to her, and the squire was dimly conscious of it. It made him irritable, and often sharp to her; her patient little face, with its somewhat sad smile, was a perpetual reproach to him. He knew at the bottom of his heart that he had not behaved quite fairly or rightly to his favorite child; he did not want to be reminded of it. He wanted everything to be as it was before that unwelcome episode about Wattie had taken place; and yet, somehow, everything was different, and the squire did not like it.

He had numberless little ways of trying to make up to her for his one great injustice. He took to making her endless presents: first, there was the saddle; then a new hunting crop; then a set of gold horse-shoe studs; then a number of books he had heard her say she liked—almost every day something came down from town for Georgie; and she was very grateful to him. She smiled, and kissed him, and tried to look as pleased as he expected her to be; but all the while she saw through it all perfectly.

"Poor papa!" she would say to herself, with a sigh, as she carried away his latest present; "poor papa! he wants to make it up to me."

Georgie's hunting was, as ever, her greatest resource. It took her out of herself; and the active exercise was good for her, and prevented her from moping; so that when it was stopped perforce by the frost, she was nearly as anxious for a thaw as her father.

"It's a good thing the brown mare has laid up just now; she couldn't have chosen a better time," said the squire, cheerily, in

family conclave one evening, trying to derive comfort from the smallest causes under the untoward state of the weather.

The brown mare, after she had been ridden for the first time, had caught a bad cold, which had prevented Georgie from using her since, for which she was not altogether sorry. Georgie was suspicious of the brown mare—there was not, when she was on her back, that complete understanding between the horse and his rider which it is thought should exist between the two to constitute a perfect mount.

If Georgie wanted to go one way, the brown mare had a habit of wanting to go the other, and an unseemly struggle would ensue. True she was good-looking and fast, and withal an undeniable fencer; but, in spite of all these good qualities, Georgie did not like her—she could not forget that Wattie Ellison had warned her against her.

When, therefore, the squire congratulated himself upon the mare's being laid up during the frost in preference to any other time, Georgie answered that she was sorry she didn't go dead lame altogether.

"I can't imagine why you dislike her so," said her father, testily. "She's a very nice mare. What's wrong with her, I'd like to know?"

"Well, papa, I was told she had a bad character," answered Georgie, looking down.

"Who told you?" And then his daughter turned very red, and was silent; and the squire knew perfectly well who it was that had told her. The discovery did not tend to improve the old man's temper.

"I will thank you not to go listening to tales against your father's horses from every ignorant young upstart who thinks he can give an opinion on what he knows nothing about," he said, angrily, and bounced out of the room, with a slam of the door behind him that made his wife jump and utter a little squeal like a shot rabbit; at which Flora laughed aloud behind her book of fairy tales.

"Your father is so rough," said Mrs. Travers to her assembled daughters.

Mary sympathizingly agreed with her mother, as she made a point of doing on every occasion, having no independent will or opinion of her own, and Georgie looked miserably into the fire, and said nothing.

All the world was out of joint with poor Georgie just now; there was no comfort

for her anywhere. Everything was going wrong, with her parents, with Cis, and with herself—they were all at odds together, and there wasn't even the hunting to fall back upon, she reflected, dismally!

A few days later Mrs. Travers and Mary went away together for a visit to an uncle in Devonshire, and the squire was left with Georgie and the two little girls.

The weather was still frosty, and the old man still grumbled; but things were rather better between the father and daughter; the smaller-sized party, and the absence of the mother, who was always a firebrand in the family, and never a peacemaker, made the home circle brighter and happier. During the last three days of that long frost Georgie was almost the gay light-hearted Georgie of old days; afterwards, when what was to come was all over, it comforted the squire to think that it had been so.

It was during these three days that Georgie told her father that she thought Juliet Blair was beginning to regret having sent Cis away.

"No! do you really think so?" he said, quite eagerly; for this was a scheme very near to his heart.

"I do indeed, papa; for I never saw any one so altered as Juliet is—she looks so ill and out of spirits; and the other day, when I was luncheoning with her, she hardly spoke and ate nothing. She is evidently very far from happy."

It was strange that Georgie never once connected the sudden departure of Colonel Fleming with Juliet's altered looks and spirits. But the Travers family had so long considered Cis as her lover that it did not readily occur to any of them that he might possibly have a rival.

"Well, that would be good news, indeed," said the squire. "Shall I write to him to come home?"

"Well, no—not yet. If she is coming round to him, it will be because she misses him; and his absence is doing him more good than his being here could do; she asked after him, and seemed pleased to hear about him."

"I'm sure I'm glad to hear it. She's a nice girl; it would be a great comfort to me if Cis married her. She would improve him wonderfully; perhaps, too, she might make him keep on the hounds when I am gone—she could do it, if any one could," added the old man, with a half sigh.

"We won't think of that yet, papa dear," said Georgie, coming round behind him, and kissing the top of his bald head fondly as she used to do in old days. "I hope you will keep them yourself for many a long year."

The squire pressed his daughter's hand for a minute, and then dropped it hurriedly, as if ashamed of his unwonted tenderness.

Like most male Britons past middle life, he was not prone to give way to emotion; the only exhibition of feeling he indulged in was that of anger. As for love, and sympathy, and religion, and so forth, the squire would have said that they formed a part, no doubt, of every Christian's nature; but he considered it unmanly, un-English, and almost indecorous to speak of such things, or to give any outward signs of their existence. So when his darling child, with a little effusion of repentant affection, made her little loving speech and kissed him, he just pressed her hand for an instant, and then hastened to change the subject to safer grounds.

"Ahem! yes, my dear," he coughed, nervously; "that puppy is growing very leggy; that wasn't half such a good litter as the last that Jenny had—nothing like."

Georgie dragged up the puppy on to her lap by the scruff of his neck, with all his big weak-looking paws hanging feebly out in front of him, and a general depressed appearance, as if he expected shortly to be beaten, whilst his chances of beauty and usefulness were discussed.

And old Chauticleer, half jealous, half confiding, rested his gray nose and one heavy paw on his young mistress's knee, and blinked up lovingly at her with his one solemn brown eye. Altogether, it was an evening like old times that the two spent together in the dingy, cosy little smoking den.

The next morning the wind had gone round to the southwest, and the frost was giving in every direction.

"Hurrah!" shouted the squire, as he bounced into the breakfast-room, with the energy of a schoolboy. "Hurrah! we shall hunt to-morrow if this goes on!"

"Hurrah!" echoed Flora, who always made a noise at the smallest pretext for doing so, jumping round the room, and clapping her hands, till her father started off and chased her round the table.

And what a commotion there was all

day!—the grooms and the whips rushing into the house for orders; the squire giving contradictory directions every hour according to the aspect of the sky; messages going up to the kennels, messages to the stables, and post-cards to be written to every member of the hunt in the county. Georgie had her hands pretty full.

About five o'clock in the afternoon a steady rain came on, which satisfactorily settled the question of the departure of the frost.

"I have told Davis to bring the mare round for you in the morning," said the squire to his daughter, coming in dripping wet from his last stable excursion, and taking off his shining macintosh in the hall—"she's all right again now, and it would do her good to be out."

"She will be very fresh," said Georgie, dubiously. "I would rather ride the chestnut."

"What does being fresh matter? I have settled for you to ride her—don't let me hear any more nonsense about it. Have you written all those post-cards? Well, then, I want a stitch put into that thick white scarf; it works up at the back. Go and fetch it, there's a good girl, and I will show you what it wants."

And Georgie obeyed in silence.

The morning broke calm, and mild, : d gray. Georgie sprang from her bed, and peeped out from behind her window-blind at a green wet world, patches of water lying in the grassy hollows, and drops of moisture clinging on to every leafless branch in the garden. No frost, at all events.

When she was nearly dressed she drew aside the curtains, threw up the sash, and leant out of the window. There was a sort of gray distinctness over the face of the earth. The hills on the further side of the valley looked near and green; every tree upon them stood out clearly against the sky; the leafless woods were purple blue; not a breath was stirring—not a sound was heard; only the chirrup of a robin, hopping about on the garden path beneath the window, and the distant tinkle of a sheep-bell from the penned-up flock in the field below. There was something depressing, almost solemn, in the leaden sky and chill green earth.

A heap of fresh-turned mould lay in the flower-bed beneath. The gardeners had been uprooting an evergreen killed by the

frost; the brown earth lay wet and heavy by the side of the gaping trench, and the robin, lured there probably by hopes of fresh worms turned up with the soil, hopped lustily down into the dark-looking hole.

Georgie watched the bird idly, and then, with a little shudder, the thought flashed across her:

"How horrible it must be to be buried! how wet and cold the earth looks!"

And she turned hastily from the window.

"A letter for you, miss," said the little housemaid who waited upon her, standing behind her as she turned round.

Georgie flushed crimson, for the letter was in Wattie Ellison's handwriting.

She tore open the envelop nervously, and read:

"MY DEAREST GEORGIE,—You know very well that no ordinary cause would make me risk your father's displeasure, by writing to you against his orders; but what I have to say concerns him as well as yourself, and if you see fit you will no doubt show him this letter. It is about your brown mare. I have just seen a man who knew all about her down in Warwickshire. He says she is a runaway, and not safe for any lady to ride. She killed the man who last had her, by bolting with him into a wood, where his head was smashed against the branch of a tree, and that is why your father got her so cheap. Do tell him this, and I am sure he will agree with me that you must not ride her. I entreat you not to do so; if anything happened he would never forgive himself. I must not write more to you—much as I long to.

"Yours always devotedly,

"WATTIE ELLISON."

Dressed in her habit, and holding this letter in her hand, Georgie came into the room where her father was already at breakfast.

"Papa, I have had a letter from Wattie."

"What!" thundered the squire, and the piece of bacon half way to his mouth dropped off his fork back upon his plate. "Georgie, how dare you?" and his face turned as red as his hunting-coat.

"Well, papa, here is the letter; he wishes you to read it, and so do I—you will see that it is not a love-letter!" she added, with a little smile.

Her father took the letter from her hand and walked to the window with it, turning his back upon her as he read it.

And then he came back, crushed it up between both his hands, and flung it angrily upon the fire.

"It's all an infamous lie!" he said, furiously.

"Papa!" cried the girl, in dismay, "what can you mean? You don't suppose that Wattie—"

"Hold your tongue with your Wattie!" he answered, savagely; "don't you suppose I know what my daughter ought or ought not to ride, without being dictated to by an infernal young scoundrel who only wants to set her against her father?"

"O papa! that's not true—he never would do that; and if the mare isn't safe—"

"The mare *is* safe, I tell you!" shouted the old man; "and if you don't ride her, you shall not ride at all—there!"

"But, papa—" began the girl.

"Hold your tongue; if you are too great a coward to ride, say so, and stop at home."

Georgie turned very white, and set her lips hard.

"I am no coward, as you know," she said, below her breath; and then sat down and poured herself out a cup of tea with a trembling hand, and began nibbling a bit of dry toast.

No more was said. The horses came round to the door. Standing on the doorstep, ready to mount, Georgie turned round and made one last appeal to her father.

"Let me have the chestnut just for to-day, papa," she said, entreatingly.

The squire buttoned his gloves in silence, with a frown on his brow, before he answered her. The whole thing, he said to himself, was a plant—just a dodge for that good-for-nothing young pauper to set his own daughter against him—if he did not make a stand now at once, there would be no end of this sort of thing.

"Let me have the chestnut," pleaded Georgie once more. He looked at her for one minute angrily, and then said shortly, "No!"

Georgie put her hand on the pommel and her foot in Davis's outstretched hand, and vaulted lightly on to the brown mare's back.

"You see she goes quietly enough," said her father, when they had gone for some little way along the road, and the mare had shown no signs of misbehaviour.

"We are not off yet!" answered Georgie, with a smile. And then she made an effort to talk about the weather and the state of

the ground, as if nothing untoward had passed between them.

She shook off her vague apprehensions, which, after all, did not amount to nervousness, and with the fresh air and the pleasant exercise her spirits came back and her vexation wore off.

She was too good a horsewoman to be in reality in the least afraid. If it had not been her lover who had warned her, she would probably have laughed at the warning she had received. After all, thought Georgie, rousing herself from her depression with an effort, with such good nerve and such a firm seat as she had, and so accustomed as she was to ride every sort of animal, there could not be much risk for her, whatever bad qualities her horse might have.

By the time they had reached the "King's Head," a wayside public-house where the meet was to be held, she was too busy greeting friends, congratulating everybody on the thaw, discussing the chance of foxes, and the possibilities of a run, to think very much of Wattie's letter and its warning.

Juliet Blair was not out—a fact which Georgie was sorry for, as she had not seen her for some days; but there were plenty of men to crowd round and talk to her, for her well-known splendid riding secured her many admirers in the hunting-field.

There were no carriages full of ladies and no dawdling at the meet on this occasion—strict business was attended to.

The covert was drawn, a fox soon found, and then—off and away!

The brown mare behaved well during the early part of the day. True, she was somewhat fresh and excitable; she kicked at starting, refused once or twice, and bucked in a manner which would have unseated a less perfect rider; but, on the whole, she was not at all unmanageable in Georgie's strong little hands.

The afternoon was drawing in when, just as the squire was thinking of bringing the day's sport to a close, a fresh fox was started, and the hounds set off at a good pace straight in the direction of Sotherne Court.

The squire and Sir George Ellison were riding side by side well in front; only seven of the field were left, following close on the hounds, when straight in front of them, crossing their line at right angles, with her head well down and her tail up, shot the brown mare at a terrific pace, Georgie, with

teeth set, sitting like a rock, but having evidently lost all control over her.

"All right!" she shouted back, as she passed, turning her head for one instant in the direction of her father.

"That mare has bolted with your daughter, Travers," said Sir George.

"She's all right—she knows what to do," said the squire, looking after her a little anxiously, but keeping on his own way after the hounds.

And a momentary wish passed through his mind that Wattie Ellison were there to go and see after her.

A groom with a second horse was following a little way behind. The squire turned round, and waved his arm to the man to follow after his daughter. When they got over the fence into the next field the squire craned his neck forwards, and saw his daughter's slight figure, two fields off, being carried away in the opposite direction.

"She'll go along Dallerton Bottom," said he to his companion.

"Dallerton Bottom!" repeated Sir George, and reined up his horse with a sudden jerk that sent him on to his haunches.

The squire stopped too, with a bewildered face. "What?" he said, in a puzzled way; and then suddenly he struck his hand to his forehead and cried out wildly:

"Good God! the gravel-pits!"

Not a word more passed between them. With one accord they turned their horses' heads, and pressed madly, eagerly forwards in the direction in which the brown mare had now utterly disappeared in the gathering twilight.

Fainter and fainter waxed the sounds of the hunt—faster and faster flew the gray hedges, and the shadowy woods, and the flat even-colored fields as they sped by them; but urge on their steeds and strain their eyes as they would, still there was no sign, no sound of her they sought!

And when at last, frantic with an unspoken fear, they flung themselves from their horses and rushed in an agony of terror to gaze down over the yawning edge of the long row of disused gravel-pits that stretched half across the sheep-dotted meadow—what was it that they saw?

Down at the bottom a dark writhing object, but dimly seen through the gloom of evening—the brown mare in her dying struggles. And close beside, a small figure

crushed and crumpled up face downwards upon the dark damp earth—and quite motionless.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

JULIET BLAIR was sitting alone in the gloom of the twilight, with her face pressed against the window, her eyes fixed on the damp shadowy garden without, and her thoughts very far away.

She was thinking of Hugh Fleming. Alas! when was she not thinking of him now? She was thinking that every minute she lived, and every breath she drew, were carrying him further and further away from her, more hopelessly out of her life; and, as she thought, slow miserable tears welled slowly up into her dark eyes, and dropped down unheeded upon her lap, heavily one after the other, like thunder drops in summer.

And then she thought of that other girl whom he had left alone behind, when he had gone out to India once before—only she had been left in her grave.

"Would God I too had been left there!" she cried bitterly, to herself.

How much happier that dead girl had been than she was! To her had come no doubts, no spurned crushed feelings, no agonies of hopeless separation; up to the last she had known no shadow over her love, no uncertainties in her glad young hopes. Her death must have been so sudden, so instantaneous, that probably she had been spared every pang of terror, every pain of parting; and yet, for hundreds who would pity poor dead Annie Chalmers, not one probably would pity the rich handsome Juliet Blair, whose life was before her, whose world was her own, and whose heart was dead!

The garden into which she stared with blinded hopeless eyes, that saw not the objects on which they rested, grew grayer and dimmer. One by one the more distant trees and shrubs on the lawn sank away in the blackness of the coming night, and the bare bushes in the garden, lit up faintly by the firelight from the room, gleamed weirdly out, like the gaunt tree shadows in Gustave Dore's pictures, against the dark background beyond.

And as Juliet rose from the window, with

a little shiver at the dreary prospect, there came the sound of horses' hoofs clattering at full gallop up the drive to the front door, and, with a loud clanging peal, the hall bell was violently rung.

With a thrill of unaccountable apprehension, she threw open the door into the hall and listened, and at the same time Mrs. Blair, appearing on the staircase, called out nervously to her:

"What is it?"

The men servants had already gone to the door, and in another instant old Higgs came hurriedly back across the hall to find his mistress. She made a step forward to meet him.

"Who is it, Higgs?"

"It's Sir George Ellison's groom, miss; and O miss, he says there has been an accident!"

"An accident!" cried Miss Blair, falteringly, whilst her stepmother ran hastily down stairs to hear. "Who is hurt, Higgs? is it Sir George?"

"O no, miss—it is poor Miss Travers; and it was close by, in the field just below the village, that it happened, and so they are bringing her here, poor young lady!"

Juliet uttered one cry of dismay, and then her presence of mind came back to her. Without a moment's hesitation she went out to the door, and ordered the groom to ride off with the utmost speed to the town to summon Dr. Ramsden; then she sent for Mrs. Pearse the housekeeper; and a room on the ground floor, which was occasionally used as a bachelor's bedroom, was hastily got ready, Juliet running about and helping the maids, and superintending every arrangement herself, with blanched cheeks and a beating heart.

She did not dare to think in what condition her poor little friend would be brought to her house. She had just gathered from the groom that Georgie was not killed; but she knew well that she must be very much hurt, as much by the man's frightened face as by his saying that they were carrying her up to the house on a hurdle.

Meanwhile Mrs. Blair sat uselessly trembling and wringing her hands on the lowest step of the stairs, with Ernestine standing over her, plying her with sal volatile and smelling-salts. It made Juliet angry to see them there. She stopped for one moment as she sped past them with her arms full of pillows, and said impatiently:

"If your mistress is ill, Ernestine, take her up stairs at once into her own room, and wait upon her there. You are very much in the way where you are; I cannot have any faintings and hysterics going on;" and she passed on.

"Ah, you have no heart, Juliet," whimpered Mrs. Blair, affectedly; "nothing seems to upset you. My nerves are so shaken by this dreadful—dreadful—"

"Come into your room, madam," interrupted Ernestine, thinking it wise to take Miss Blair's hint; "it would be terrible for you to be here when the poor demoiselle arrives."

"O no—no! I couldn't see her!" cried her mistress, clinging hysterically to her; "take me away!"

And Ernestine did take her away safely up to her own bedroom, where in time a strong cup of tea and a couple of nice hot buttered muffins effectually restored her equanimity.

And presently they brought her into the house. From the mist and darkness of the winter evening, into the light and warmth and sweet scents of exotic plants in the hall, came the hurdle, with its living suffering freight, slowly, carefully carried between two men. Close behind, with a white scared face and chattering teeth, half dragged along, half supported by Sir George Ellison's strong arm, tottering and stumbling at every step, and staring in front of him with fixed crazy-looking eyes, came Squire Travers. Three or four gentlemen, with frightened awestruck faces, followed them, to see if they could be of any use.

And thus it was that Georgie Travers was borne over that doorway through which she had so often passed before—sometimes tripping in lightly in her habit, jumping up the stone steps two at a time; sometimes more soberly following in the wake of her parents, in all the sheen of her silken evening-garments; sometimes with soft laughter, if she came in with others; or sometimes whistling a merry little tune below her breath, if she came in alone.

Often and often had she come up those steps and entered that hall before, but never as she comes in now.

Georgie lies stretched flat out on the hurdle, half covered by her father's scarlet hunting-coat. She is not unconscious; her eyes, big and blue, are very wide open, and on her deathly white face there are neverthe-

less two crimson fever patches, one on either cheek—for they had poured half a flask of brandy down her throat when they first found her.

As she catches sight of Juliet coming to meet her, she begins to speak, weakly, waveringly, with fever-stricken rapidity.

"O, is that you, Juliet? I can't think what they are bringing me here for. I am not hurt badly, you know—only bruised and stiff. Do tell papa I am not hurt. I know I could walk if they would let me try. I can't be hurt, you know, because I don't feel any pain to speak of—only so stiff. I'm just bruised and shaken a bit. If I could have got the mare's head round in time!—but I am not hurt, Juliet; do tell papa I am not hurt."

And then they got her into the bedroom that was prepared for her; but when they lifted her off the hurdle on to the bed, she fainted dead away.

After a very little while Dr. Ramsden came dashing up to the door in his dogcart, and putting every one out of the room save Mrs. Pearse, who was a useful sensible woman, and had been accustomed to illness, he proceeded to examine his patient.

Sir George Ellison, and the one or two friends who lingered hoping to hear a favorable account, waited in the dining-room, where Higga, mindful even in the midst of the general confusion of the traditional hospitality of Sotherne Court, brought forth the best sherry and a round of cold beef, and pressed the downcast guests to allay the pangs of hunger and thirst.

Juliet took the squire into her own little morning-room. There, with her own hands, firm but gentle, she fetched him a glass of wine, and cut him a tiny sandwich; and though at first he shook his head, somehow she persuaded him to take them.

"You must keep up your strength, dear Mr. Travers, for her sake," she whispered; and the squire obeyed her, and took the much-needed refreshment from her hands like a child.

"She will die—I know she will die!" he said, looking up piteously at her with his horror-stricken eyes.

"O no, don't say that! wait to see what Dr. Ramsden thinks," she said, soothingly. "She said herself she was not in pain."

"If you had seen her at first," he said, with a shudder; "and the height it was!—thirty feet at the least; and the mare—curse

her!—was killed. And it was all my fault, too—I made her ride the brute!" And then he laid his head down on the table in front of him, and groaned aloud. And so they waited.

Would the doctor never come out of the sick room? At most it was only twenty minutes, and yet never did twenty minutes pass so slowly!

The old man sat quite still in front of the table, with his head bowed down on his arms; and Juliet stood by him, now and then stroking the poor gray head softly with her gentle hand, or stooping down to whisper something—some soothing loving word, some fragment of a prayer, or some pitiful helpful text from the Bible—anything that came into her head. Heaven knows if it did him any good, or even if he heard it—probably not; yet, in a dim vague way, it gave him patience, and helped him over the agonizing suspense of those awful twenty minutes.

And then Dr. Ramsden came in. He was a gray-haired man, with keen clever dark eyes and a kindly expression. He had known Georgie Travers from her childhood. What he had to say of her was certainly very grievous to him, more especially when the hard words must be said to an old friend like the squire.

"I have made her a little more comfortable. I trust she will sleep," he began, nervously.

"Tell me the truth, Ramsden," said the squire; "I'd rather know the worst at once."

"I am afraid, my dear friend, that the truth is the worst—the very worst!" he answered, in a very low voice.

"You mean, she must die?"

And the doctor nodded.

The old man staggered back with a groan, and leant against the wall with his face in his hands; but Juliet burst forth earnestly.

"It is impossible—quite impossible, at her age, and with her constitution. I will not believe it! We must send to London. I will telegraph at once. Tell me whom to send for, Dr. Ramsden—any one you like; but more advice we must have, and the very best that can be got."

"My dear young lady," said the doctor, laying his hand on her arm to detain her, for she had already gone to the door, "you may send for every doctor in London, but they could not save her. It is a perfectly hopeless case—her spine is dislocated!"

And then Juliet, too, fell back in despair.

"You had better go to her, Mr. Travers," said Dr. Ramsden, turning to the old man; "she was asking for you; and had you not better send for Mrs. Travers?"

"Yes—yes, of course. Juliet, you will see to that, won't you?" said the squire, rousing himself; and then he added in a frightened whisper, "she is away from home, a long way off. Will there be time, do you think?"

"Yes; she may last about twenty-four hours. We must be very thankful that she is in no pain; and I don't think she will suffer much. She is perfectly conscious, only a little light-headed at intervals, from feverishness."

All night long Juliet and the squire sat by Georgie's sick bed, one on each side. She lay very quiet, wandering a little sometimes, but for the most part dozing uneasily, in short fitful snatches. But neither of her watchers closed an eye all night.

During the silence of that long vigil, in the gloom of the darkened room, lighted only by the shaded lamp and the faint red flicker of the firelight, there passed through the squire's mind many sad and bitter reflections.

He saw plainly now how hardly and selfishly he had treated his favorite child, and how gentle and dutiful she had been in her submission to him. With deep self-reproaches, he recalled his obstinacy and bad temper; he remembered how, by calling her a coward, he had goaded her on to ride the brute that killed her; and ever the words, "It is my doing—all my doing!" formed the miserable refrain of his thoughts.

When the morning broke, Georgie opened her eyes and spoke.

"Papa!"

"Yes, my darling?"

"I think I am going to die! tell me if I am?"

"O my darling child!" began the squire in a broken voice; and she interrupted him quickly.

"Never mind, papa. I know it. Poor papa!" and she stroked the gray head that lay bowed down on the bed beside her. "Poor papa! I am so sorry for you; but you know it was a thing nobody could tell. I never should have believed that I couldn't hold the mare. Don't fret about it; it couldn't be helped. What has become of her?"

"The mare?"

"Yes!"

"She is dead," answered the squire, and a strong shudder at the recollection of that awful leap shook the little helpless frame. Presently she spoke again.

"You would not mind my seeing Wattie now—would you, papa?"

"My darling, no. Shall I send for him?"

"Yes; send for him, and for Cis too, at once," she answered.

Juliet slipped from the room to send off

the telegram, and Georgie seemed satisfied and dozed again.

There was a hushed suspense over the whole house. The servants went about on tiptoe; the doors were softly shut; the numberless neighbors who, as soon as day dawned, sent or came themselves to inquire, went round by the back way; not a bell was rung; not a voice was heard above a whisper; for over Sotherne Court hung a deep and awful shadow—the shadow of the angel of death.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

THEIR MUTUAL EXPERIENCE.

BY ELLEN E. KENYON.

Miss Penible sat in her cozy parlor, awaiting, with fluttering heart and thoughtful visage, the coming of Mr. Craintif, her long-devoted lover.

Since the halcyon days of sweet sixteen, when he and she were next-door neighbors, and he, bashful fellow! used to blush and stammer when he asked her to go to a concert or a sociable, he had been to her the "particular friend" necessary to a young lady's social equipment.

Since then, however, he had become so accustomed to her companionship, that the blushes had forgotten the way to the browner cheek, or hid themselves beneath the thicker growth of whiskers.

Further than this, however, the provoking creature had failed to improve as he ought to have done. For more than ten years Miss Penible had been expecting him to propose, and still he seemed contented with his position of "particular friend." At any rate, he had not as yet summoned courage to better it, though she had given him many intimations that such a thing was possible.

But the last time he called he had seemed so increasingly affectionate, and had spoken so insinuatingly of a happiness more complete than that afforded by friendship, that Miss Penible's fluttering heart had fluttered more timidly than ever with a sensation of an approaching crisis, and for the hundredth time she asked herself, —

"What shall I say if he really does propose?"

But the long-postponed declaration was destined once more to recede into the indefinite future. Sylvia's younger brother, enthusiastic over his first presidential vote, and oblivious to the fact that something particular might be taking place that evening, entered to talk politics with Mr. Craintif at the most inopportune moment he could have chosen.

Mr. Craintif was not, as his name would seem to indicate, a coward in politics. It was only in love that even his tongue lacked heroism. He defended Tilden manfully against a host of accusations, and kept his

ground firmly against the fiery spirit of a more youthful voter.

But how dull for Sylvia to sit there, and hear them discuss the respective merits and demerits of opposing candidates, when her heart had been erewhile so full of tender expectancy!

The election was a bore; and she hoped it would be a rainy day, so that a Democratic victory might fitly punish her Republican brother for his infatuation. She had always heard it said that a rainy day favored the Democrats, because Republican patriotism was too feeble to stand a wetting.

"Just like their loud pretensions!" she exclaimed inwardly, "to weary one with noisy arguments about party principles; and then, when the time comes to show their public spirit, to stay in the house out of the rain. If I had a duty that way, I'd make less noise, but I'd vote!"

Still, when it was all over, she felt it "a great relief" to have the decisive moment of her life put off an evening or two. She would have time to consider, not only what to say, but also how to say it.

As she and Adolphus parted at the door that evening, an unusual pressure of the hands seemed to say, — on his part, "To be continued;" and on hers, emphatically, "In our next."

And now, for all the time that had been granted her for preparation, she was in a worse flutter than ever, expecting him.

As a prosy method of calming herself, she sat down to the piano, and tried the scales; but her fingers blundered nervously, and she had to leave off. They obeyed her better when she directed them in a series of tender chords. Still, an occasional false note warned her lest Mr. Craintif should come just in time to catch a discord.

She arose, and bent over "Picturesque America," lying open upon the centre-table.

Just then he rang.

Supposing her position to be graceful, she did not change it; and presently Mr. Craintif was ushered into the room.

She turned, greeting him with a smile and a blush; which latter symptom of embarrassment manifestly contributed to the graceful ease with which he led her to a seat, and stationed himself beside her.

"A — you were playing before I came in, I think," he began.

"If why, no! I was deeply interested in those lovely engravings of the Yosemite I showed you the other evening. They are so beautiful, that I never weary of studying them."

"As I came up the street, I thought I heard music."

"Oh! I had been trying the scales shortly before. Perhaps you walked slowly. But — really — my fingers trembled so I could n't play."

She supplemented this observation with another charming blush, and hastily added, —

"It's so cold, you know, this evening; indeed, quite shivery, as little Aggie expresses it."

"I hope you will find it warmer, now I am here," said Mr. Craintif, with a smile full of tender meaning.

Really, his witticisms were taking quite a pleasant turn.

But it would not do to meet him more than half way. Miss Penible chose to be coquettish.

"On the contrary," she replied, with a saucy shake of the head, which would have been eminently becoming ten years ago, "I think you have brought in a fresh supply of cold air. I shall have to turn on a little more heat."

Just then it flashed across Miss Penible's agitated mind that it was not a cold evening at all, — in fact, a very mild one; the preceding month having used up all the year's fall supply of cold weather.

Nevertheless, she fumbled a little with the register, pretending to coax what was not there, and then seated herself upon the piano-stool, where she could face her companion, or turn around and thrum the keys, as occasion demanded.

"I was a cake to ask you to play," remarked her eloquent lover.

"Did you ask me to play? Really?" retorted Miss Penible, feeling that it was his turn to be confused by this time.

"Did n't I?" he asked. "Well, I meant to."

"And why was your intention foolish?"

she demanded, with an arch threat in her voice. "Come! explain yourself, if you please."

"Why, were n't you sitting beside me here? and, if I had let playing alone, you would have been here yet."

"Oh!" exclaimed Miss Penible deprecatingly, wheeling about, and running an arpeggio.

Mr. Craintif thought her manners were unusually shy, tonight, for all her sauciness; and, for the fiftieth time, the thought of proposing to her entered his mind.

But that was a step to be gravely considered before taken, and there was plenty of time to make up his mind about it. It would not do to risk putting an end to their long friendship by any act of impulsive foolishness.

Her coyness made him feel wonderfully comfortable, and he launched forth into conversation on various indifferent topics, drifting farther and farther from the tender theme which filled the thoughts of Miss Penible.

Was he never coming to the point? Did n't he mean to propose, after all? Or was he keeping it for the last precious moments at the door? Or was he wondering how best to approach the subject, and endeavoring to hide his difficulty by an unusual flow of talk? Perhaps it would be as well to help him a little.

"Mr. Craintif," she said, after some consideration, "whatever you came here to say tonight, I beg you will say it right out, without fear or favor."

She added the last words, in the hope that their witty sound would prove engaging, and smiled sweetly on him as she spoke.

Mr. Craintif looked mildly astonished.

"Why — I — really, I had nothing particular to say," he stammered forth.

"Do you mean to say that you came here tonight with nothing weighty and unusual on your mind?" said Miss Penible, emphasizing each word, and marking it off with a nod of the head, while her hands lay in her lap, clasped, as if they only waited for an affirmative answer as a signal to rise in the air with astonishment; and a significant look of "Is it possible?" searched her miserable companion through and through.

Poor Mr. Craintif! Enveloped in confusion which grew worse confounded with every nod of her head, every glance of her

eye, every word she spoke, he sat in agony, unable to frame an answer, yet feeling that one of some kind was absolutely required of him.

"I — I was — about to remark, simply," he faltered out at last, and then came to a sudden stand-still.

What was he about to remark? What had he been talking about when she so strangely changed the subject? It had quite slipped his memory, whatever it had been.

"Say it, Adolphus! say it!" nodded Miss Penible encouragingly.

If he had said it, she would probably have fainted in his arms, from sheer astonishment, the next moment.

"Really, I — just came to see you," Mr. Craintif managed to assert presently. "That was all."

"That was all?" repeated Miss Penible, remorseless coldness in her tones, and scorn written plainly on her features. Indeed, the sweetest of smiles, disappearing from a bright countenance, left a very disgusted one.

"Yes, that was all," said Adolphus faintly.

"And to hear me play, perhaps?" amended Miss Penible, with cutting sarcasm in her tone.

"Yes, of course I should like to hear you play," ventured Adolphus, wondering whatever he had done to deserve all this torture, and hoping she would now remove that terrible gaze from his exceedingly uncomfortable person.

Miss Penible turned energetically, with a reckless toss of the head, and dashed off into "La Chatelaine Waltz." She was no longer nervous. She was calm with the calmness of despair. No false, jarring notes now.

Shortly afterward, she had the pleasure of bowing Mr. Craintif coldly out of the front door.

From the look of cynicism which gave expression to her face when she returned to her cozy parlor, one would have supposed that misanthropy had entered her heart, to the exclusion of all softer feelings. But one would have been very much mistaken in forming such a judgment. She was merely out of all patience with Mr. Craintif, while toward the rest of mankind her friendly sentiments were as yet unmarred by one streak of malice.

"I wonder if he thinks this can go on forever!" she exclaimed indignantly.

Then she sat gazing at the piano keys a long time in silence.

"I have it!" she cried at last, while the light of a new and brilliant idea illumined her countenance. "I have never made him jealous. I'll try that, and see if that will bring him to his senses."

Upon that, she arose, well satisfied with the bright originality of her plan, closed the piano, and left the room.

Behold the result.

The next time Mr. Craintif called, he found Mr. Taylor, a young man of severely auburn hair of the most dashing hue, engaged in close conversation with the object of his, Mr. Craintif's, affections.

Mr. Taylor had a waxed mustache, of the most stunning description, to match his hair in color; his immaculate white vest was of the very latest cut; his shiny patent-leather boots were the neatest fit imaginable; and, in addition to this, when the fact is remembered that he had been to dancing-school five terms, and knew all the tricks with his feet which could pose his slender figure to advantage, — as also the most artistic way of crossing his legs when in a sitting posture, — you have a complete picture of Mr. Taylor.

He was, indeed, a very dangerous rival; and Mr. Craintif felt his heart — which had been in his mouth, ready for utterance, all the way to Sylvia's — sink to the very toes of his boots; where, by the way, there was more room for it than it would have found in the toes of Mr. Taylor's boots. But then, being a bigger heart than Mr. Taylor's, it was positively necessary that more room should be left there to provide for its possible descent in case of depressing circumstances.

However, all this is not exactly to the point.

Mr. Craintif had really meant to propose that evening. He felt pretty safe in doing so now, he and Sylvia had known each other so long, and she had certainly treated him with marked favor throughout their acquaintance.

True, he had "meant to propose" many times before, and had let many auspicious moments slip by unimproved. Perhaps to-night would have slipped by similarly to the others, even had he found Miss Penible alone.

As it was, of course, proposing was entirely out of the question; for, even if Mr. Taylor went away early in the evening, the mere fact of his having been there at all was sufficient to revive all of Mr. Crainlif's doubts and uncertainties, and it would require more than one serene interview with his beloved to restore his easily shaken self-confidence.

But Mr. Taylor did not go away early in the evening. He sat and talked with Sylvia, selfishly monopolizing her attention, except that every once in a while he or she addressed a condescending question or remark to Mr. Crainlif; sat there, and talked about nothing, as if his sole end and aim were to simply outstay that injured gentleman.

Poor Adolphus sat too, and made his mental notes on their conversation and deportment. Some of the mental notes foolish; but then the apparatus for making them was weak. Indeed everything concerned was weak, even to Mr. Taylor's voice and Mr. Crainlif's resolution, which latter was not strong enough to take him away until he had endured two hours of this dreadful misery.

When he did take his leave, however, Miss Penible's freezing farewell at the door, so different from her usual "*Good-night*," acted upon him with the bracing effect of a cool, crisp breeze. With sudden energy, he started off on a brisk walk down the street, and had by many blocks passed the corner where he should have turned before he discovered his mistake.

Inwardly he felt the reverse of exhilaration. "*She loves another!*" was the burden of his sad thought, with occasionally a slight variation, as "*It was all a dream, — a beautiful, beautiful dream!*"

Then he thought with gratitude of Sylvia's kindness in letting him know the utter hopelessness of his aspirations before he had gone so far as to throw himself at her feet.

"*She is an angel!*" he murmured enthusiastically; "so different from the graceless coquettes who lure men on to declarations of love just for the proud and selfish gratification of spurning the proffered affection, and counting their offers. Sylvia must have perceived the character of my sentiments toward her only recently; for how suddenly her manner has changed! — from the sweet friendliness of last week to the

cold and distant formality of tonight. I might have known before, though; for what am I, compared with her? *He would grace a million.*"

It will be inferred from this that Mr. Crainlif was a clumsy fellow, little skilled in the reading of feminine hearts through the medium of feminine actions.

"It is evident," he went on in thought, "that my visits have been painful to her. And she shall be pained no more by me," he added, firmly compressing his lips. "I will put myself out of her way, — by desperate means, if necessary."

Here Mr. Crainlif found that he had passed his street, and was going at headlong speed toward the river. His first impulse was to turn back; but second thought whispered, —

"Why not go on, and end it all at once and forever?"

First thought won the day, however; for Mr. Crainlif was a moral man, and suicide was a crime. Besides, it would break Sylvia's heart to know that he had destroyed himself on her account.

Nevertheless, he was bent upon performing some act which would effectually place him beyond the temptation of further annoying Sylvia with his unwelcome presence at her house.

He pondered the subject for a week, at the end of which time an inspiration came to him. Loneliness may have suggested the thought. He determined to advertise for a wife.

It was a brilliant resolve, — perhaps a rash one. Still, he could not lose much now by any course of action; for what happiness could possibly await him, now that Sylvia no longer filled his future? He felt the necessity, however, of pondering the subject another week before irrevocably committing himself.

Meanwhile Sylvia sat in her cozy parlor, evening after evening, expecting his coming in vain.

Poor Sylvia! she began to wish she had not adopted the "*rival*" plan. Jealousy is an edged tool: she had played with it, and cut herself. But, worse than all, she had cut him deeper still, — dear Adolphus!

"What if he should despair entirely?" she thought anxiously. "*Timid, foolish fellow!* It would be just like him. I might have relented a little at the door, at

least, and not have sent him away quite broken-hearted."

Two weeks passed by, and Sylvia's remorse was turning to resentment.

"He could n't have thought much of me to be alienated so easily," she thought with indignation. "After all, I might better have placed my affections upon some one else less stupid and unmanageable. And it is not too late even now," she added, with a scornful toss of the head. "I will marry some one else."

Who the some one else was to be was a question less easily solved. There were reasons why Mr. Taylor was entirely out of the question.

Miss Penible had been out all the afternoon attending to church duties, and it was on the way home that she determined to "marry some one else."

She went up-stairs, and laid off her hat and shawl. Then, at the sound of the tea-bell, she descended to her evening meal. Under her plate lay a letter directed in *his* hand. She started, blushed, and hid it in her pocket until such time as she could peruse it alone.

After tea, she repaired to her cozy parlor, and opened the precious missive so fraught with fate to her eager expectation. Here it is, *verbatim* :—

"My Angel of the Past, — I love thee, and because I love thee have I left thee. Thou didst not covet this acknowledgment of thy sway; nevertheless I count it my glorious privilege to proclaim thee mistress of my heart, though I ne'er may hold a place in thine. When I saw thee last I realized the hopelessness of my hopes; and, believe me, the desperation of my despair was overwhelming. I believed thou hadst discerned my secret, and that the sight of my unfortunate countenance must henceforth be painful to thy compassionate, but, alas! unloving eyes. I therefore made a vow that I would nevermore intrude myself upon thy happy solitude; and, to fortify myself against temptation, have since taken a step which will forever preclude the possibility of my visiting thee, be the magnetism which draws thee never so strong. Farewell! Fare thee well!

"Your once devoted

"ADOLPHUS."

"What are you looking so glum about,

Syl?" inquired that horrid younger brother, coming in a quarter of an hour later.

Sylvia hastily slipped the letter into her pocket, and pointed to an open newspaper lying beside her on the floor.

"The state of the country!" she exclaimed theatrically. "The appalling power of corruption. They will count Hayes in in spite of all that honest men can say or do."

Sylvia thought it safe to derive her indignation from any paper, for all alike were full of accusations against the officials concerned in the late election.

"But I thought you did n't trouble your head about politics," said the horrid brother, picking up the paper, and noticing its date, — April 30. It had evidently been used for wrapping purposes, and had been left on the parlor floor by accident.

"I don't know enough about politics to care whether Hayes or Tilden is elected," retorted Sylvia. "But when one is lawfully elected, I don't want to see the other counted in," she concluded, with much lofty feeling.

"It is indeed a sad pass we've come to," said the horrid brother, "when fraud dares raise its head so high as to say who shall be President of the United States."

"Bah! I have no patience to talk of it!" exclaimed Sylvia, hoping thus to end the conversation, and rid herself of her unwelcome companion. But the horrid brother, casting "stale news" aside, took the day's paper from his pocket, and settled himself for a comfortable perusal.

This, however, was better than if he had persisted in talking to her. She leaned back in her cushioned chair, and endured his presence in all taciturnity.

Sad and puzzled thoughts being no measure for time, she knew not how long they sat thus. At last, however, he arose, placed the paper in her hand, pointed out a paragraph, said, "Read that," and left the room.

She read "that," but gathered no meaning from the lines of print. She did not even stop when she came to the end, but read on mechanically all down the column of personals.

She came to herself while perusing the last one. It signified that a gentleman in easy circumstances would like a wife. He was thirty-two, and the lady must be at least five years younger.

"Just his age!" she mused, pathetically. "And shall I never see him more?"

Presently, she read the advertisement again.

"I have said I would marry some one else," she continued, mentally; "and now I must. Suppose I answer this personal?"

Meditation then scanned the mighty proposal in all its bearings; including the danger of falling a victim to some ruse or practical joke, with many other dangers, and the precautions which must be taken to avert them.

"It would not do to send my real name or my own picture," she soliloquized, "until I knew the gentleman. I should have to disguise my hand too. And, in case of a meeting, I should go deeply veiled, and assert my real identity only when pretty sure that all was safe and right."

It did not take Sylvia long to reason herself into the adoption of this plan. It brought to hand so opportunely the "some one else" she had been at a loss to name.

She now felt that all the time she had spent in Mr. Craintif's company had been wasted. Also that she could not afford to waste more valuable time in grief for his defection, for her teens were even now left far back in the irrevocable past.

What was to be done must be done quickly. Still she would do nothing rashly. She would give herself some hours in which to decide the momentous question. She would take it up-stairs with her, and "sleep on it," as she had slept on her lessons years ago.

The result was a brief but satisfactory correspondence, in which both parties disguised their names, and no pictures were exchanged; at the close of which a meeting was arranged at a certain transfer office.

The lady was to wear a navy-blue veil, and to display a cluster of bittersweet berries at her throat. A similar cluster was to adorn a buttonhole of the gentleman's coat. They were separately to enter a certain car, and to alight at the door of a certain art gallery. Then, for the first time, they were to exchange mutual recognitions; the gentleman taking the lady's hand to lead her up the steps, as if he had been with her all the way, and she accepting his escort.

The eventful day came, clear and cold. Sylvia, attired in her most neutral suit, safely hidden from the knowledge of friends by her thick veil, and wearing at her throat

the bittersweet berries, sallied out for the transfer office, where she sat down, in doubt and trepidation, to wait for the great unknown and the certain car.

Five human hearts beside her own beat actively in that transfer office, but I think it is safe to say that not one among them beat as Sylvia's did. These people were all upon ordinary errands of business or pleasure. She was about to commit herself to a union for life, or to find only disappointment, and to give up forever all hope of such a union. No wonder the beating of their hearts could not keep time with hers.

As she revolved all this in her mind, a springing step approached the door, and Adolphus Craintif entered the transfer office. Sylvia's heart beat faster than ever with fear of his searching glances, which seemed to be attracted by some peculiarities in her dress. Suppose he should recognize her!

But no: he turned his back upon her with an air of satisfaction, as if pleased with the result of his scrutiny, and stood in the doorway watching for a car.

Presently the jingling of bells announced that one was coming, and Mr. Craintif turned and looked once more toward the lady in the blue veil, as if to say, "Here is our car. Are you coming?"

This time Sylvia's glance took in a part of his appearance, which had escaped her notice before, when his face first made him known to her. With this discovery there flashed upon her a flood of realization which overwhelmed her like a great wave.

She murmured, "Good heavens! the berries!" sank back upon her seat, and knew no more.

By this time the five other persons had left the transfer office; but two women now entered, from the very car which was to have borne the lovers to the art gallery. Mr. Craintif called their attention to the prostrate lady, begging them to "do something for her," and to call upon him for any aid he could render.

"Run over to the druggist's for a bottle of smelling salts," said one of the women.

Mr. Craintif obeyed, murmuring, "Poor thing! no wonder she fainted. I feel like fainting myself."

He returned almost immediately with the smelling salts, and handed the bottle to one of the women, who waited at the door for it. He did not re-enter the office, for he

felt that it would not be honorable to look upon her face before she was prepared to reveal it of her own free will.

"I'll keep out of the way," he thought, "and just remain near enough to be of use if needed, and to see that she is properly attended to."

"It's only a slight faint," said the woman who received the bottle from his hand. "The salts will fetch her out of it. Were you together, sir?"

"Oh, no!" exclaimed our hero. "I only happened to see her faint, that's all."

"You both have the same kind of berries, so I thought you were together."

"A mere coincidence, madam; nothing more. However, I will remain here at your service, in case you shall need further assistance, and to see if she comes round all right."

The smelling salts proved efficacious; and, soon after, the lady in the blue veil walked timidly past him, and entered a car, into which he followed her, though it was not going toward the art gallery, seating himself at the further end.

He also left the car when she did, but kept a respectful distance, his only object being to see that she reached home in safety. It never occurred to him that she might not desire him to know where she lived. If it had, his punctillious sense of honor would have kept him from following even for the laudable purpose which now actuated him.

What was his astonishment to see her mount the stoop of Sylvia's home, ring the bell, and then, turning, beckon to him.

Should he—dared he follow? He must either do so or beat an ignominious retreat, which he was very loth to do. Besides, now he thought of it, he could not escape the conviction that this was Sylvia herself. Her form, her gait, her whole bearing told him it was she.

If it were so, could she reasonably reproach him with writing an advertisement which she had so promptly answered? Hardly: they were equal on that score.

As he reached this point in his cogitations, he reached also the door of Sylvia's dwelling, which she had entered before him.

The servant was waiting to receive him, and once more he stood within the hallowed precincts of that cozy parlor wherein Mr. Taylor had taught him to despair.

"Could it be," he asked himself, "that Sylvia cared nothing for that Taylor after all? Could it be that she had loved him" (Mr. Craintif) "throughout? Was it all a sad mistake? and was heaven still a possibility? In short, had he made a fool of himself?"

As if in answer to these mental questions, Sylvia entered hastily, and, throwing herself into his arms, burst into tears.

"O Adolphus!" she sobbed, "I thought you did not love me!"

"I thought you loved another!" he murmured, soothing her with a warm embrace.

"I only wanted to make you jealous, Adolphus."

"And you *did* make me jealous, — madly jealous!"

A blissful pause, in which Sylvia's sobs ceased; and somehow or other they were seated upon the sofa, her head still resting on his shoulder, his arm still about her waist.

"Adolphus!"

"What, dearest?"

"I recognized your style in the advertisement, and afterward in your letters, though you tried to disguise the hand. I understood you better than you did me."

"To be sure you did, my angel!" exclaimed Adolphus. He believed it all implicitly; therefore the reader has no right to be skeptical.

"When had we better be married, Adolphus?"

"Now!—this afternoon!—right away!"

"O Adolphus! what a foolish fellow you are!"

"Well, why not? What's the use of putting it off?"

"No use, I suppose, Adolphus."

"I thought something was up," teasingly remarked that horrid brother, as he accompanied them to the minister's house that evening. "I thought something was up when you took to reading news of the late election frauds out of papers six months old."

THREE RAINY DAYS.

BY MISS JULIA A. KNIGHT.

It seems to me that three rainy days stand out in my life with more especial vividness than any others, — and it is these I am now going to write about; but, in order that their dreariness or their unhappiness may be rightly understood, the events of other days before and between them must be related too. I begin with the first day.

I, Nellie West, awoke, in the darkness of a November morning, in a back room of a tall narrow house in a dull London square, and struck a light to see the time. I fairly groaned when I saw that it was five minutes to seven, for to lie in bed after seven o'clock was a luxury unknown to me. Early on the previous night I had gone to bed with a sick, nervous headache, and I had passed a wretched, restless night, listening to the heavy, ceaseless rain, and now, just when I felt I could drop into a peaceful sleep, I must get up in the cold and the darkness and begin my daily round of work. But, however unwilling, I arose quickly, and, throwing on an old waterproof cloak which served me for a dressing-gown, I ascended to a yet higher story of the house and awakened the servant.

"O Ann," I cried, in a tone of distress, when I found she was fast asleep, "what shall we do? It is after seven o'clock, and it is Friday, — our busiest morning of them all!"

The girl replied that she would be down in a "jiffey," and with such a satisfying assurance I returned to my own room. My toilet did not take me long, and as I descended the stairs Ann followed me.

I first opened the shutters, dusted and tidied the dining-room, and then returned up-stairs to the drawing-room to prepare it for being swept. I had got all the lighter furniture carried on to the landing, when I heard a loud knock at the front door. I looked at the time-piece; it was just eight o'clock. Who could such an early visitor be? I leaned over the balustrades and listened while Ann let down the chain and drew the bolts of the hall door. A voice I knew very well inquired if I was downstairs, and before Ann had time to reply I

rushed down and met the visitor, Marmaduke Cammish, in the hall.

"How early you are!" I exclaimed. "You have come to bring me that new book, have n't you?"

"No," he answered somewhat gravely; "I was here last night and left it for you, for you had gone to bed, — ill, I think. Are you better now?"

"Yes, thank you. What are you come for then?"

"I am come to say good-by. The regiment sails for India on the day after to-morrow."

The color left my face, and I clutched at the balustrades to steady myself.

"Oh, you cannot mean it, — you cannot mean it!" I wailed.

"Indeed I do," he answered firmly, but evidently touched by my distress. "Why, pussy, I did not think you would take it to heart like this!"

"What shall I do without you? what can I do?" and I laid my head on the balustrades and burst into tears.

We were an incongruous couple, — he so tall and bright and good-looking, and I a dejected, half-formed girl, not yet fifteen, dressed in a shabby black dress that was much too short for me, and, in fact, too strait in every way.

"Come, come, pussy," he said, putting his hand on my shoulder, "I want to be cheered up, not cast down, — so look up and give me a kiss and wish me *bon voyage*; there is no one else to wish it, and no one has given me a kiss since I was five years old."

I raised my face and met his dark eyes looking wistfully into mine, and in a passion of grief I flung my arms round his neck.

"I wish you everything that is good!" I cried. "And, oh, I wish Adeline had married you: then you would never have gone to India. Why did n't Adeline marry you?"

"There was a very good reason," he answered quietly, "which I will tell you when I come back. I must go now."

"I know the reason. It is because you

are not rich enough; and she is a selfish, wicked thing, and I hope she 'll be punished."

"Good-by, Nellie!"

"Good-by; but, oh, when will you come back?"

"In seven or eight years perhaps, if the Sepoys do not kill me."

Seven or eight years! I thought he might just as well have said a hundred at once.

"So, once more, good-by, Nellie!"

"Good-by!" And I opened the hall door for him and he was gone.

I watched him to the end of the street, and at the corner he turned and smiled and took off his hat to me, and then disappeared from my sight. How desolate and ill I felt, and how equally desolate was the outward appearance of things! Daylight had barely dawned, the rain descended steadily and unceasingly, and not a soul was in the wet and miry streets. I stood at the door for a minute or two, and then with a start I awoke from my trance of woe and went in to resume my interrupted work.

About half-past nine or a quarter to ten my mother and my sister Adeline came down-stairs, and we all had breakfast. We were not a happy family. Papa, a younger son of a good family, had died about five years before, leaving mamma so slenderly provided for that it was a continual struggle to make both ends meet, especially as mamma was determined to keep up the position in society which she had held in papa's lifetime, and secure Adeline a good settlement in life, which meant a wealthy marriage. All mamma's hopes were centred in Adeline; she was seven years older than I, and very beautiful, but selfish and scheming and cold-hearted, and there was little love lost between her and me. She had always looked on me as an interloper and possible rival, and through all my childhood I never remember a kindness from her, not even one kind word; and now that I was growing up, and might have been a companion for her, and with no promise of beauty to alarm her, she still treated me just the same, and ignored me with immovable coldness. And her influence with mamma was so great that mamma herself seemed jealous of me for Adeline's sake, and I had become a sort of household drudge, helping one servant to do the work of three, and keeping myself in clothes by selling fancy-work.

Adeline had numerous admirers, but only two seemed to have any decided object in view,—and these were Lieutenant Marmaduke Cammish, of a good old Yorkshire family, and who would succeed to the baronetcy on the decease of the present baronet, his uncle, a bachelor of over sixty, and John Stewart, a middle-aged London stock-broker of immense wealth but no pedigree. Of the two, Marmaduke Cammish was by far the better match from a worldly point of view, besides being young, merry, and handsome, and he was favored accordingly, and his visits to our house were more frequent than those of John Stewart, who nevertheless came very often, and always received a welcome,—for Adeline was too anxious to escape from home-poverty to discard one suitor before the other had plainly declared himself. All these facts I gathered from scraps of conversation between mamma and Adeline.

Marmaduke Cammish was my favorite, and I was very glad that he was the favored one with Adeline, for he was kind and good to me whenever he came, and I looked forward to happier times when he should be my brother. He brought me books to read, and was always ready to explain what I could not understand; but for him indeed my education would have been little better than a heathen's. John Stewart, on the contrary, never took any notice of me whatever, he was so entirely devoted to Adeline; therefore it was no wonder that I liked Marmaduke best.

Adeline had known Marmaduke only about four months however, when he told us the startling news that his uncle had married a pretty but low-born girl.

"So how much chance have I of ever being baronet now?" he asked merrily, little supposing, as I sadly thought, how much else he lost with his chance of the baronetcy and estates. "It is lucky I have a profession; and I must now win fame and wealth in that, if possible."

I had never seen Adeline in such a passion as she was on that night, after Marmaduke had gone.

"What a fool his uncle must be to marry at his time of life!" she cried vehemently. "I wish he had been poisoned before he had done it!"

In vain mamma endeavored to soothe her by reminding her that John Stewart still remained.

"John Stewart!" echoed Adeline scornfully. "What is he, compared to Marmaduke Cammish? If I ever could have loved any one, I could have loved Marmaduke: nay, I even think I do love him. John Stewart! Can he give me a title, I should like to know, or one of the oldest names in England?"

"Well, Adeline," I said, in the excitement of it, "if you love Marmaduke, you should marry him, whether he has the title or not."

"When you are asked to speak, it will be time enough to do so. Go to bed instantly!" exclaimed Adeline, turning fiercely upon me.

"Yes, Nellie," said mamma, "your sister has quite enough to bear without your little shafts of malice." So, taking up my book, I retired to bed.

In a month after this, Adeline and John Stewart were engaged to be married, and Marmaduke Cammish was going with his regiment to India, where the Sepoy mutiny was at its height. But I never realized that he was going until he came to bid me good-by as I have related, and to that day I must now return; not that I have much more to say about it, well as I remember it, for after breakfast I felt too sick and ill even to work, and after dinner I went to bed,—to bed, but not to sleep. Throughout that gloomy day I lay in open-eyed dreariness, watching the rain while it was daylight, and listening to it during the dark evening, and far on into the lonely night.

The next few months were busy with preparations for Adeline's marriage, and mamma made a great hole in her little capital in providing a suitable *trousseau* for the bride, trusting that Adeline would pay it back when she was Mrs. Stewart. This Adeline omitted to do, however, and after her marriage we were poorer than ever, and I still toiled on at my fancy-work, and even gave a few music-lessons, and thus eked out our scanty means.

And the years rolled on. Adeline had twice become a mother, but each time the child had died after a few weeks of miserable life. She was expecting another in a few months; and I was staying with her for a day or two, as she was rather poorly, and needed company. I was never invited there unless I was needed, nor unless she wished to display some new grandeur before my unaccustomed eyes. Her husband was

most indulgent to her, but their marriage was not a happy one, for Adeline's extravagance surpassed the bounds of even his patience, and her outbursts of temper were frequent and terrible. They had been married rather over six years now, and Adeline, in her fits of passion, often threatened a separation.

One day we were seated at luncheon, and Adeline asked her husband for money.

"How much do you want?" he asked, with such a careworn look that my heart bled for him.

"Fifty pounds."

"I have warned you again and again, Adeline," he began slowly.

"You should have warned me before we were married," she interrupted fiercely. "Had I known"—

Her husband placed a twenty-pound bank-note beside her plate, and rose from the table.

"Try to make that do," he said, and left the room.

Adeline went into one of her terrible fits of passion, during which I sat quite still, fearful, by the least movement, of turning her wrath against myself.

About an hour afterward, when she had become calmer, a servant entered the room, saying that a person wished to see me. I wondered at this, but, glad of any excuse to escape from Adeline's presence, without a question I left the room. A man was waiting in the hall, and I recognized him at once as John Stewart's head-clerk.

"Has anything happened?" I gasped, frightened at his pale, bewildered looks.

"Mr. Stewart has shot himself, Miss West. He is dead, and they are bringing him home. Will you break it gently to his wife?"

But there was no need of gentleness, for Adeline had followed me from the dining-room, and had heard it all. She clutched wildly at me, and swooned away.

The confusion and horror of the next few days are beyond description; but everything was clear at last. Mr. Stewart had died insolvent. There was not sufficient for his creditors, much less a provision for Adeline, and she came home to live with us.

She resumed her old place in the house, and I mine, and about a month afterward her baby was born. She was very ill, and helpless, and constantly complaining of the

want of luxuries she had been accustomed to, whilst poor mamma impoverished herself still more to buy the things she absolutely needed. I was no longer the partly selfish girl I had been in former days, and I gave mamma almost every penny I earned. I was used to shabby clothes and scant food, and could bear the deprivation; but the thankless way in which my self-denial was received, and the continual complaints I heard, made me sad-hearted and weary, and whatever I did for Adeline was done, I am afraid, very unwillingly. The baby was distinctly intrusted to my sole charge and management; and Heaven forgive me if sometimes my most predominant feeling toward it was hate! It was too weakly and too peevish for any pleasure or pride to be taken in it.

One morning, late in October, I arose earlier than usual, having been disturbed by the baby and the heavy rain. I was the first down-stairs, and, opening the front door, I looked out. The streets were deserted and the rain was descending steadily. A sudden rush of memory came over me, and I could almost imagine that it was the day, now seven years gone by, when Marmaduke Cammish had bid me good-by. The old feeling of desolation came over me again,—for was I not as desolate and hopeless now as I had been then? Ay, even more so. And Marmaduke Cammish,—where was he? He had won glory in India, young though he was, and, his uncle having died childless, he was the baronet at last, and all the estates were his. But whether he was alive or dead, in India or in England, I did not know.

When Adeline came down-stairs that morning, she was unusually fretful. Mamma was busy doing something to the dining-room carpet, and I had to attend to Adeline.

"I think it would not take you very long to make a new cushion for this sofa," she said crossly, as she established herself upon it and wheeled it to the fire.

"Make one yourself," I answered. "It is easy work, and you have plenty of time."

The words were no sooner out of my mouth than I regretted them, for Adeline immediately uttered scream after scream until poor mamma came running in in alarm.

"What is the matter? My darling, what is it?" she cried, hastening to Adeline,

while I took up the wailing baby and began to pace the room to quiet it.

Adeline ceased screaming.

"How long, I want to know, am I to be dictated to by Ellen?" she inquired fiercely. "And how long am I to be taunted with my weakness and poverty?"

"O Nellie!" said mamma reproachfully, "you might be more careful,—you might indeed."

I made no reply. I quieted the baby, and choked back the bitter words and bitter tears, and continued my pacing to and fro.

At this moment the servant opened the door, saying,—

"A gentleman has called, and he would come up,—I could n't hinder him;" and a gentleman did indeed enter the room, smiling at our embarrassment.

Older and sunburnt, and with even a scar across his face, it was Marmaduke Cammish nevertheless. And my first feeling was one of joy and thankfulness. Mamma and Adeline also recognized him at a glance, and mamma advanced with outstretched hands, whilst a keen, eager look came into Adeline's face, and she hastily smoothed her untidy hair.

"You know me then?" cried Marmaduke, smiling into mamma's face as he held her hands.

"Yes, indeed," answered mamma; and then Marmaduke approached Adeline. She put her hand into his with a plaintive little glance into his face.

"I know you too," she gently said, "but do you know me?"

"Yes, I do," he answered. "You are not greatly changed, except that you look very ill."

The tears rose thickly to her dark blue eyes, and she looked down hastily as if to conceal them.

"You shall hear the tale of my troubles some day," she faltered; "I know I shall have your sympathy."

"Indeed you will," he answered with strong, genuine heartiness; and a silence followed.

He had forgotten me. I had ceased my pacing to an fro when he entered the room, and had stood by the table waiting for my turn of recognition and greeting, and it had not come. With a sullen pang at my heart, I resumed my walk with the fretful child. But I had judged too hastily, for, as I

reached the far end of the room and then turned, I met him face to face.

"I thought this was my old friend Nellie," he said, with his old unforgettten smile.

The kind tone seemed more than I could bear, and my eyes also filled with tears as I lifted them to his face.

"I thought you had forgotten me," I said, laying my hand in his.

He looked at me intently.

"No, I — I don't think I have forgotten," he said, with a hesitat.on unusual to him; and then he returned to Adeline.

"Ellen, if you cannot keep that child quiet, will you kindly take it out of the room?"

It was Adeline who spoke, and without a reply I passed from the room. I laid the baby on my bed, and it soon fell softly asleep, but I staid beside it until I heard Sir Marmaduke take his departure, and then I descended to the drawing-room, and found mamma and Adeline congratulating each other.

"But, my dear Adeline, it would have been so much better if you had happened to have a collar on," said mamma.

"It would," I remarked emphatically; but mamma gave me such an angry look that I wished I had held my peace. Luckily Adeline was too engrossed with her own affairs to notice me.

"I cannot have made a very unfavorable impression," she said serenely, "since he accepted our invitation to tea so readily."

"I wish it had been dinner instead of tea," sighed mamma.

"It does not matter at all," cried Adeline, with a little laugh. "Mamma, how lucky I am!"

"How so?" I suddenly asked, turning quickly on Adeline. "Has Sir Marmaduke proposed to marry you already?"

Adeline glared at me; mamma spoke.

"Another speech like that, Nellie, and you must earn your bread as governess."

"And I would gladly do it," I exclaimed in desperation, with a defiance and rebellion and misery I had never had any conception of before, — "I would rather do anything, I would, than continue to live in the same house with Adeline!"

Mamma was too astounded at this unexpected outburst to do anything but gaze appealingly at my sister, who, however, only smiled.

"Ellen is a little envious, I think," she said languidly; "do not mind her, mamma."

"Well, I must go down-stairs now and get that dining-room carpet down again," remarked mamma quietly, but I could see she was very angry with me: "how I wish I had never taken it up!"

When we were left alone, Adeline and I maintained a strict silence, Adeline smiling to herself now and then, and wearing a very sentimental expression of countenance, and I soon followed mamma into the dining-room, penitent now for my angry speech. I helped her in every way that I could; I pushed and lifted the heavy furniture, and hammered in the nails with untiring industry. But mamma vouchsafed me neither word nor look, and at last, in trying to lift the sideboard, both bodily and mental energy suddenly failed me, and I cast myself down on to the carpet and burst into tears.

"What is the matter, Nellie?" inquired mamma calmly.

"I am so miserable!" I sobbed.

"And I am afraid, Nellie, you will continue to be miserable until you subdue your temper, — you are very envious and spiteful!"

"Mamma, I am not spiteful, — I am not envious! But why should Adeline have everything and I nothing?" And I beat my hands upon the carpet in agony, for this feeling of rebellion and longing was so new to me, and so inexplicable and intolerable.

But, in a short while, I calmed down to my normal condition, and when Sir Marmaduke returned for tea I was in the dining-room, calmly setting the best tea-cups. I heard him go up-stairs, and in a short while afterwards, tea being ready, he entered the dining-room with Adeline on his arm, she looking lovely in her deep mourning, and with a flush of excitement on her fair face.

After tea they again retired up-stairs; but I had the baby to wash and get to sleep, and it was late in the evening before I entered the drawing-room. When I entered, mamma was dozing over her knitting in the easy-chair, while a little table was drawn up to the couch on which Adeline so gracefully reclined, and she and Marmaduke were engaged in a game at chess. They were too absorbed to notice me as I took my usual place on a low seat in a recess by the fire, and began my embroidery. When

Marmaduke had at last said "Checkmated," he turned and looked round the room.

"How like this is to the old times!" he said. "We used to sit here and play at chess; and you, Nellie, would sit where you are now, with the firelight just touching your face; and, only that you are a little taller and a little more womanly, I could imagine time had never moved since then."

Did he count time by my years? My face flushed with pleasure, and I was about to reply, but Adeline caught the chessmen with her sleeve, and scattered half of them on to the hearth-rug, and in Marmaduke's picking them up, and her apologies, and then the commencement of a new game, I had no opportunity.

It was late when Marmaduke rose to go; and, as the servant had gone to bed, I went down-stairs with him to let him out and to secure the door after him. He put on his thick shaggy overcoat, and even his hat, and then, placing both his hands on my shoulders, he looked earnestly at me.

"You are very little changed," he said. "But why have you been crying this afternoon?"

I looked up wretchedly into his kind, handsome face, but I could not speak.

"Your sister has told me all her troubles," he went on. "Perhaps you have troubles too?"

"Yes, but not to tell you!" I answered sharply, feeling that he was tormenting me in a way I could neither understand nor bear. If he did not soon go, I felt in my mysterious misery that I should strike him.

"Ay, love-troubles are best kept to one's self, are n't they?" he remarked, letting me go.

"If I had no troubles but love-troubles," I laughed scornfully, "I should not have many."

"All is going smoothly then, is it?" he inquired; and I then saw he was joking, — so I pretended to laugh.

"What does it matter to you?" I asked; and I opened the door, and he bid me good-night and went away.

I put out all the lights and returned upstairs. Adeline had retired, and mamma was raking the fire, and, giving her a kiss, I also went to bed, and thus ended the second rainy day.

As the weeks went on Sir Marmaduke became a very frequent visitor at our house, but I saw little of him, and went my way

undisturbed, except by Adeline's overflowing spirits and triumph, which I found far harder to bear than her former fretfulness and bad temper.

One January day she seemed rather put out after a morning visit of Marmaduke's; and I, on coming into the drawing-room, was asked pretty sharply what nonsense I had been telling Sir Marmaduke, as he had just asked when I was to be married.

"What did you tell him?" I asked quietly.

"I laughed in his face," cried Adeline insultingly, "and told him there had never been the least prospect of such a thing, and I did not suppose there ever would be."

What prompted me to answer as I did I cannot comprehend; for, giving a meaning I felt to be utterly false to my words, I said, —

"Thank you, Adeline; you have served me a better turn than you think."

Adeline turned very pale, and I hurried from the room, very uneasy at what I had said, and wondering what the consequences would be. I was not long in suspense. On the following morning mamma told me that she was going to see her sister, my aunt Anne, and make arrangements for me to stay with her for a short time.

"I dare say you know as well as I do why this has to be done," said mamma sternly.

She then proceeded to give her directions for the day. She would not be back until tea-time, she said; and, as Sir Marmaduke was coming to tea, I was to remain in the dining-room, so that he and Adeline might have an uninterrupted *tete-a-tete*, as he was coming early. "And I hope and trust," concluded mamma, "that everything will be nicely settled between them today."

That morning, when I first came downstairs, it was pouring with rain as steadily as on the previous days I have written of, and again I had opened the front door and looked forth.

"Wet again!" I exclaimed. "So what will happen? For it is always on these hopelessly dreary days that something happens I can never forget." And so, as mamma spoke, I thought I knew what would happen on this rainy day. But for all that I did not understand why I should feel so unhappy; for had I not often and often wished and almost prayed for Adeline to marry Marmaduke; and, now that it was

really coming to pass, why could I not rejoice?

"Because I know now that she is not worthy of him, and will not make him happy," was the answer I gave myself; and I was satisfied with the explanation.

Mamma being absent, Adeline and I ate dinner in silence; and after it Adeline immediately went up-stairs to put on her best dress, ready to welcome Marmaduke.

"How happy she is!" I muttered to myself. "How happy she is, and I so tired and sad!"

The baby was poorly that afternoon, and would not go to sleep. I paced with it in my arms up and down the dreary dining-room for two hours, from the door to the window, from the window to the door, wondering each time I approached either if it would not have ceased its moans and gone to sleep by the next turn. The rain beat against the windows; daylight was already fading, and all seemed very dreary. Was it any wonder that the slow tears followed one another down my cheeks as I thought of the past, the present, and the future, all alike so cheerless?

Suddenly I heard Marmaduke's brisk knock, and, after he had taken off his coat, the servant showed him up-stairs. I knew Adeline had not descended to the drawing-room yet; still I was surprised to hear Marmaduke open the door immediately after the servant was gone, and come down-stairs and enter the room where I was.

Uncomfortably conscious of my tears, I turned and looked out of the window; but he came and stood beside me and greeted me, and with great tact quite ignored my wet cheeks. The baby had fallen asleep at last, so I laid him gently down on the sofa, and then stirred the fire into a blaze.

"Adeline will be in the drawing-room in a few minutes," I said, "so I think you had better go up-stairs."

"No, thank you," he replied; "for 'lost opportunities fly away in anger,' you know, and, if I lose this, perhaps it may be a long time before I have another opportunity of a little quiet chat with you. May I take a seat?"

"Certainly."

And whilst I sat quite in front of the fire he sat on one side.

"I wonder if you remember the old times as well as I do?" he began.

"Possibly I do."

"Do you remember saying good-by?"

"Yes."

"You are not so affectionate now as you were then."

I made no reply, and he continued, —

"Do you remember the question you asked me about Adeline?"

Now his reason for this "little quiet chat" was coming! I answered, —

"Yes."

"And do you think the reason removed?"

"Of course it is," I answered contemptuously: "you are Sir Marmaduke now, and have plenty of money."

"That was the reason you imagined, and doubtless it would have been a reason also, had not the one I knew of embraced all others, and to the present moment it remains unchanged. I said I would tell you what it was when I came back. Shall I?"

"If you like."

"The reason — one of the reasons, of course — that your sister did not marry me was that I never asked her, and never had the slightest intention of doing so."

I looked at him in silence, while the dawn of a sudden hope, conviction, something, I knew not what, rendered me unable either to speak or to stir.

"I had seen some one else I thought would make a better wife," he went on, becoming earnest and anxious, "and some one I had already begun to love, although she was not then a woman grown. Nellie," — in a quick, low whisper, — "do you understand?"

Yes, I understood. I understood many things now, my own self included. I could not speak, but I held out my hands to him and hid my face safe against him as he folded me fast in his arms.

"O Nellie, the time has been long to wait," he said tenderly; "and I had so little hope to cheer me!"

"Why did n't you tell me then — seven years ago?" I whispered.

"How could I, when the chances were that I should never come home again? How could I have condemned you to a weary waiting like that?"

"Marmaduke, you've been very good to me!"

"And I will be good to you, my patient, uncomplaining darling, come weal, come woe."

His kind words to me, so unaccustomed to kindness, were more than I could bear,

and my tears fell fast; but, held safe in his dear arms, it did not take me long to cry all my weariness and bitterness of heart away; and then we had a quiet talk about the past and the future that now wore such different hues.

In a short time Ann came to lay the cloth for tea, and I was obliged to help. Marmaduke also helped, and we were very happy and merry, and I was astonished at my own merry laugh and my own merry heart, and still more astonished when I looked in the glass and saw my face with its shining eyes and radiant looks.

Suddenly mamma came into the room in her every-day dress, so I knew she must have been in some time to have got her wet things changed. She was surprised to see Marmaduke.

"We did not think you were come," she exclaimed, as she shook hands. "Adeline is up-stairs expecting you."

And mamma instantly called Adeline, who soon entered the room.

"Have you been here long?" she inquired haughtily of Marmaduke.

"I scarcely know," he answered, looking at his watch. "Anyhow it has not seemed long," he added; and I knew he glanced at me, but I would not take any notice.

I busied myself at the table, anxious to avoid mamma's or Adeline's notice of my happy looks.

When we were seated at the table, I dared not lift my eyes to Marmaduke's.

"Will you take a cup of tea?" I asked, looking steadily at the tea-pot.

"Is that the way to ask, Nellie?" demanded mamma. "Don't cast your eyes on the table, as if you were asking Sir Marmaduke to take poison. When will you learn manners?"

So I looked up, and met Marmaduke's eyes fixed on mine, and I could not help breaking into a most conscious smile, which he returned.

"What are you laughing at?" inquired mamma.

"Nothing," I said, and went on pouring out the tea.

"And why," asked mamma, when all were served, "have you given me a cup of hot water instead of tea? Are you afraid that my nerves are unable to bear tea, pray?"

Hereupon Marmaduke burst into such ungovernable laughter that I was forced to

follow suit, while mamma and Adeline looked on in indignant amazement.

"O Nellie," gasped Marmaduke, at last, "you are a bad one to be intrusted with a secret! We must make a confession now. Mrs. West, I would fain have asked in a more decorous manner, but — but —"

He hesitated.

"I do not know what you mean," said mamma stiffly.

"I mean," answered Marmaduke, quite solemnly now, — and, advancing to me, he drew my hand through his arm and led me to mamma, — "I mean, will you give me this little girl for my wife? I love her dearly, — I have always loved her, — and I will do my best to make her happy."

Mamma turned very pale and looked nervously at Adeline, — Adeline had risen from her seat, and was staring indignantly at Marmaduke and me, — but she paid no heed to mamma; so, after a long pause of hesitation, mamma replied, —

"Of course, Sir Marmaduke, I can offer no objection; but I do think you had better reconsider your determination. I think you might do better."

Marmaduke flashed such indignant eyes upon mamma that I there and then registered a little vow that I would never be the one to put him into a passion.

"Possibly," he said, in answer to mamma; "but it is far more patent to me, Mrs. West, that I might have done worse, — inconceivably worse!"

And I knew then that, if Marmaduke had been quiet and wary, he had not been unobservant, and everything I had ever suffered seemed to melt entirely away, for he knew of it all, and understood, and that was recompense enough.

I heard a rustle behind me, and, looking round, I saw Adeline leaving the room. After some further conversation, mamma also went up-stairs, bidding Marmaduke a curt good-night. When she was gone, Marmaduke put a bright diamond ring on my finger.

"I bought it for you seven years ago," he said, "and since then it has been with me wherever I have been."

Then he took his departure. He held me close against him as we stood at the hall door.

"I wish I could take you with me now," he said anxiously.

"I wish you could," I answered sincerely

enough, for, now that he was going, the terrors of what I might have to face upstairs assumed dreadful proportions. But it was not so bad as I feared. I went boldly into the drawing-room after he was gone, and found mamma sitting all alone by the fire.

"Where is Adeline?" I exclaimed.

"She has gone to bed," answered mamma, — "and, Ellen, I do not suppose your sister will ever speak to you again; and I cannot but say she is justified."

"Mamma," I said softly, longing to put my arms round her neck, but not daring to do so, "let me talk to you, and tell you how happy I am!"

"An unhappy child has more need of her mother; I am going to sit with Adeline;" and mamma left the room.

But I would not be cast down; I fetched up the kitten and told her everything, omitting nothing, and it purred its congratulations softly. And when I took it down to its box in the kitchen Ann was just going to bed. In rather a shy way she said, —

"I've said it, Miss Nellie, from the very

first, and I've often longed to tell you that there was no cause to fret; but I thought it was best to leave things alone, for they was in safe hands with Sir Marmaduke. Eh, but he's a sharp one, and has see'd what's what through it all. Lor! it's been as good as a play!" and she offered her honest congratulations.

I smiled as I thanked her, and then I went up-stairs to my little bedroom; and the third rainy day ended as I knelt by my bedside in a trance of unutterable thanksgiving.

I would fain relate the history of yet another day that dawned a couple of months after this: but it does not come under my present category, and must therefore be left to the imagination, for it was the reverse of a rainy day; and it brightly fulfilled the old saying, that "happy is the bride the sun shines on," for never was a bride happier than that bride, and never was a wife happier than this wife who on that day changed her insignificant little name of Nellie West for the honored one of Lady Cammish.

THWARTED VENGEANCE.

BY MRS. M. A. DENISON.

"I am rash, Florence; I own to the Southern blood that leaps through my veins,—that makes me, as you say, wilful and passionate. But I am a *man*, with a man's feelings and high principle of honor. I am no boy, Florence, to be wiled from this gay smile to that,—I must and will be heard."

"It is better not," said Florence Marhard, turning away half impatiently. "We have been such good friends, Willis, I have hoped nothing would disturb the calm current of our happiness." And the sweet-faced girl sighed as she seated herself again.

"Florence—Florence—how could I help it?" cried the young man, passionately. "Have I not been always under the spell of your presence? When you were but a child, I loved you, madly. I cannot—I will not see the prize I have toiled for, early and late, slip from my grasp. Oh! if you knew how hard I have tried to be good, for your sake,—to be, if possible, worthy of you,—you would let your heart love me, I know you would."

"If it were in my power," said Florence, sadly and seriously. "If it will comfort you, let me tell you how hard I have tried

to find in my heart one chord that would thrill in sympathy with the feelings you profess. It is in vain, Willis. I love you as a friend, as a brother, even,—for that you have always seemed,—but, oh! you would not take for a wife one whose every impulse revolts at the thought of that other sacred union!"

The man stood up, fire in his eyes, a scarlet flush on his cheek, his arms folded, his hands clenched (though out of sight) till the blood almost came. He gazed at the girl with a strangely varying expression,—now cruel and relentless, now tender and pitiful.

"Florence, you will never know how much I love you. Two years ago, when I thought that perhaps I had lost you, I sought to put the wide seas between us. I traveled fast and far, even to the wilds of Australia. The suffering of that time has left indelible marks upon my face. I thought I had conquered." He stopped for a moment, his lips working convulsively. He turned away to hide his emotion, but in a few moments resumed. "I came back, hoping, as I had heard nothing from you,

that you were married. If it had been so, all might have been well. But you met me with the same kind tones of old, the same sweet smile. O Heaven! how my pulses throbbed with hope again! All the past was forgotten. I madly believed that my absence had worked a change in your feelings. I dared to dream again, — I dared to love. I cannot give you up, Florence, — I will not give you up!"

Florence rose from her seat, frightened at his manner, trembling as she noted his changed appearance.

"No, — don't leave me as if you were afraid of me; I can't endure that. I will not harm you, Florence; but I cannot give up the hope that you don't understand your own heart. that you don't understand me. You, at least, love no one else, do you, Florence?"

"I have never loved any man, Willis," she said, calmly; "and if this is the complexion of that great mystery, I trust I never may. I" —

"Florence, you know not what you are saying," cried the young man, his swarthy face glowing again. "What have I done to distress you? Pity me! pity me! It is not love that prompts me to violent speech; it is disappointment where I had staked all my dearest hopes. Oh, why was I ever born to endure this misery!"

Florence stood there, pitying. She trembled, and could have wept, but it would not do to show any emotion that might be construed into signs of relenting. This man's fiery nature did not suit her usually calm temperament. How was it possible that she, so quiet and retiring, had won a love so terribly real, — so enduring? She could not understand it, but stood there perplexed, pitying, yet strong in her resolve.

It was quite true, as she had said; no man had won her love, and she was not prepared to know by one single pang the misery that he was suffering. She knew that his eye was haggard, his brow too early marked with strong lines, his heart heavy, for many a labored sigh came up from its depths; but she could feel no sympathy with him, and but faint pity. Sometimes she was impatient under his homage, — more than once after this almost stormy interview. His nature was not a fine one; it rather resembled the iron that will corrode till the rust has eaten beyond the surface, than the good gold that bears the tempering

heat of the fire and comes out purer than before.

Florence was obliged, in self-defence, to be cool in her demeanor before him, and it sometimes enraged him. His petitions became more like persecutions, and at last for a time they did not speak together. He carried his resolves smothered in his own bosom, till his jealousy grew to be a consuming fire. He watched her at all times with a secret rage, and blood that ran hot to his fingers' ends if he detected her bestowing her smiles on others. She grew to be afraid of him, and yet a sort of pity kept her powerless. If she had confided in her father (she had no mother) there might have been a way of escape. In consideration of the young man's own feelings, he would have placed them far apart. But gradually it grew to be a matter of course to see him watch her under his bent, black brows, — to find him following like a shadow wherever she went; and as now he said but little of his love, she hoped it would in some inexplicable manner die out and leave her free.

One sabbath a stranger appeared in the rector's pew. He was not handsome, though his was one of those faces that suggests beauty rather than possesses it. Yet he was sufficiently attractive in manner and appearance to set the whole parish to talking and wondering.

"I want you to get acquainted with him, if that jealous lover of yours will let you," said Letitia Saunders, a little blonde in pink and white, who called on Florence the following week, and seated herself airily, with an eye to the disposition of her founcess.

"My jealous lover!" exclaimed Florence, in some surprise.

"Yes, that haughty Southerner whom some of us admire so much. Little do we get for it in return, save cool indifference. 'He is joined to his idol; let him alone.'"

Florence smiled at her flippancy, but crimsoned, too.

"He is — no lover of mine," she would have said, but could not with truth. "Nothing to me," she added, — "nothing whatever. Of course he is attentive, — any man would be who holds the position he does in my father's household; but his regards, in my sight, are only brotherly, I assure you."

"Strange! It is all round that you are engaged."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, I heard it at Mrs. James's, and even Mr. Felix told me as if, I imagined, — perhaps it was only imagination, after all, — Willis Boynton had himself told him."

It flashed over Florence suddenly, painfully. Could Willis stoop so low as to circulate this report, and thus, driven by his insane jealousy, attempt to bar all others from approaching her? The thought made her cheeks tingle, — gave her a thrill almost of anger.

"I am not engaged to Willis, and never expect to be, Letitia. I care nothing at all for him, and only receive his attentions as I would those of my own brother if I had one. You must see how cool I am toward him."

"Yes, I have often remarked that; but people will talk in this village, so I suppose there'll be scandal enough with reference to the new comer who is very rich, and I think splendid looking, don't you? Now there'll be a rush to see who can get him. I'm going to stand back and look on. I have always said I never cared about being married, you know."

"Is he a relation of the rector?" asked Florence, willing to pursue the subject, for to tell the truth she had been somewhat moved by the sight of this stranger, — she who met most men with indifference.

"Don't know, likely not; though some say he is a cousin of his wife. At any rate he is distinguished, and all but handsome, — just the sort of man to make a hero, don't you think so?"

At that moment, in burst another figure, dress and ringlets in disorder.

"O girls, excuse me, but I'm in such a hurry. We're extemporizing a picnic to Sunbright Lake. It's a capital day, and papa says he will go, — and Mr. Allington, that's papa's visitor, — and we must be all ready by eleven, with luncheons, and cape-bonnets, and hats, you know. Oh, dear! I'm all out of breath." She sank down rosy and panting. "We sha'n't have many men, but there's Amos Keith, — Captain Keith, I ought to call him, to be sure, — but then he's engaged to Mary Dahvers, so he's no company; then there's Willis, and Herbert Anthon, and" —

"Willis is out of town; won't be home till night," said Florence.

"Well, not much of a loss," laughed the little creature; "he would have been de-

voted to you. It does provoke me to see these engaged people."

"We are not engaged, Minnie," said Florence. "I am surprised. This is the second time today I have heard what is indeed news to me."

"Oh, I'm glad of that!" cried Minnie, "for I never quite liked Willis; he's so dark-looking. But it's the truth that the engagement is spoken of everywhere."

"You may contradict it on my authority," said Florence, calmly.

"I will, then; but come — what about our fun? I can't give it up. If you must know, I was the first one who thought about it, and papa laughed at me and doubted my success. That spurred me. It's a glorious day, neither too hot nor too cool; and we'll have at least one man there who is n't married or engaged. Won't that be a novelty?"

"And he's so fine-looking," said Letitia.

"Is n't he? Papa says he never saw a nobler specimen of manhood. You should have heard papa and him *parley vous* in French last night. It was splendid. Papa says he has n't had such a treat in a great while; says he is the most finished French conversationalist he ever met with out of Paris. What do you think of that? Brush up your French, girls."

"Dear me, I hope he is n't a learned man," said Letitia, piteously.

"You would think so if you had seen him romp with me last night. If there was n't a curly-headed little boy in the army, for whom I have a strong regard," she added, laughing and blushing, "I don't know what would be the consequences. But come, girls; speak quick, — will you go?"

"I will," said Letitia, rising with decision.

"So will I," returned Florence, catching the enthusiasm. "What shall we carry?"

"Oh, anything that will taste good spread out on the grass. Mother is getting tablecloths and ware ready, and Tinny is marking down, so we must get up a party. Oh, dear! I've to go on the hill for the Denlieghs and Amhursts. Be sure and be at the depot by eleven. Won't we have a merry time?"

Yes, Florence felt a strong presentiment that she, at least, should enjoy the occasion. She did not say so to herself in just so many words, but it was an immense relief

to feel that she was not to be followed about by the man whose eyes had grown to be almost intolerable to her. Once she had thought them beautiful, for Willis was acknowledged to be very handsome by everybody, and yet, strange to say, he was not generally liked. Many people were heard to say that it was a pity so charming a girl as Florence Maynard could be induced to like him, for there was something uncanny in his appearance. It was such a pleasure to feel that nobody was watching her, or attending to every want, noting every movement. Her spirits rose high as she made her preparations. It was somewhat strange that the open, noble face of the stranger mingled some way with her anticipations. She laughed at herself for the thought, but it was nevertheless true that she had been very much pleased with the new-comer's appearance, and found herself unconsciously comparing the two faces, — that of Willis always losing by the comparison.

Everything was in readiness when the little company met at the cars. Two strong men carried an immense basket well packed between them. Each party had at least a lunch-basket filled. All were merry, gay, and laughing as they took their seats, conscious that no marplot was in their midst.

The grounds arrived at, there was plenty to do. Some busied themselves in bringing water and wood, for they were to have a genuine tea-making; others took out the viands and placed them in order; others still strayed nearer the edge of the beautiful lake.

Florence was engaged at the spring. She had nearly filled her pitcher, when a musical voice near her said, —

"Let me assist you."

She looked up almost trembling to see two dark blue eyes smiling in her face. Strange how that glance shook her equanimity. She, who was generally so fearless and frolicsome, was dumb now. She merely thanked him, and he, lifting the pitcher, walked slowly by her side.

"I have heard much of your American woods," he said, "but I never thought to find anything half so beautiful as these painted leaves. How gorgeous they are, — like the bright birds of a tropical climate, only nestling by hundreds upon boughs and branches."

"Your forests, then, do not exhibit these changes?"

"No; our climate is too damp. And even the sunshine here affects me differently. It is neither lurid, burning, like that of a Southern clime, nor pale and sickly like England's. It is so clear, golden, and exhilarating. You ought to have great poets here. You have — I was reading last night — Whittier and Longfellow. What justice they do the beautiful works of nature. The rivers leap and the forests sing through their verses."

"I am glad you like them," said Florence, with animation.

"Oh, I see much to admire here," and he glanced again in her face, his eyes lingering there for a moment. "Look, — they find it difficult to make the fire burn. I must help them."

Saying this, he hurried toward the little group, almost blinded with the smoke, and scattering the wood, built up a pyramid with skilful fingers, placed a few coals on the top, set them in a blaze, and presto! there was a fire that shot up a flame of clear amber against the brown trunk of the sturdy oak near.

"That was skillfully done," said the rector. "Neither burnt nor blackened fingers."

"I have been in the woods before," he said, cheerily, but from that moment a sadness came over his face which did not leave it quickly. He drew quietly apart from the rest, and one good at the study of the human face might have seen in his a sad, weary, almost hopeless dejection that the gayety surrounding them might not dispel.

It was a happy time, nevertheless. There was the snowy cloth set with tempting delicacies; beyond, the bright green of the sward, clumps here and there of young trees, mighty growths of oak and maple, and still beyond, in the softness of the shining distance, the deep bright blue of the small lake, sparkling, snapping its wet fingers in the vivid sunshine.

The girls were all anxious to know the new-comer, but though he was very social, dealing his smiles with unstudied partiality, at times it was easy to see toward whose good graces he inclined the most. Sweet Florence, with that nameless charm in lips and eyes, patient, mirthful, or quietly serious, attracted him irresistibly, and more than one pair of knowing orbs sparkled over the discovery. A row on the lake, a circle under the protecting shadow of some pleas-

ant trees, brightened by story and song, and the day's toil and pleasure were over. It was quite unaccountable how in all the confusion that ensued, it being nearly dark, the young stranger should find himself by the side of Florence Maynard. Yet it was, as she knew, when, once seated, some one took her basket from her tired hands and held it, nodding and smiling as much as to say, "You see I have taken the liberty."

As for Florence, she was startled at the intensity of her emotions. She had never before admitted the thought of love, but now some strange, subtle instinct told her that she had met her fate. For a few short moments she yielded to the pleasure of this dawning but exquisite happiness, when suddenly a dull, quick sense of pain made her breathless. The light was so placed (for the sun had set) that it threw a strong reflection upon the cracked mirror at the opposite end of the car, and there, distorted by the flaw, no doubt, yet looking hideously sullen, sat Willis, apparently watching her conversation with her new friend. The baleful fires of jealousy burned in his eyes, his brow was black and lowering. At once her comfort was destroyed; a feeling of uneasiness crept into her heart, — a dim presentiment of coming evil. Ostensibly Willis was reading his newspaper, — in reality, studying her face, and drawing his own inferences from her companionship. Suddenly the paper was folded, the young man arose, turned and moved unsteadily toward her. Arriving at her seat, he stopped and bowed, — bowed also to the stranger to whom he had been introduced, — and leaning against the back of the next seat, he directed his attention to Florence.

"It is quite an unexpected pleasure to meet you here. Was n't it rather a sudden arrangement, this excursion? — for I suppose you have had a picnic in the woods."

"It was rather sudden," said Florence, quietly, biting her lips, galled at the patronizing manner he had assumed.

"Will you have this seat?" asked the Englishman, politely.

Willis declined, but kept his position, chatting to Florence, talking upon such subjects that the stranger must have felt himself uncomfortably in the way, until the cars stopped at the station. Then he insisted upon doing the honors, took possession of Florence and her basket, wished the Englishman good-night as if he had been

defrauding him, and accompanied her home. Their walk was a silent one. Willis had gradually worked himself into a fit of jealous desperation.

"I have no doubt you enjoyed your day immensely," he said, as they neared the door of their residence.

"Never better," said Florence, shortly.

"We do not always know whom we become acquainted with at such places."

"You forget we were all acquainted."

"I presume so; you seemed quite chatty and confidential with your friend of yesterday."

"I don't know that I was particularly confidential; I certainly did not enter into conversation with our minister's guest. I presume I need not ask your sanction in such matters."

"Oh! no, — of course not," he replied briefly and bitterly; "or in any other, as to that."

"I certainly shall not," said Florence, and there was a shade of contempt in her voice.

No answer; but Willis rang the bell with such violence that two of the servants came running to the door, fearful that their master was certainly brought home either dead or dying. Florence entered, indignant, — Willis followed, angry, and furiously jealous. He could scarcely overmaster his passion. He raged up and down the parlors, after she had gone to her room, like a wild panther; he did not know, himself, but he should go mad, — certainly such passions had never possessed him before. Forward and back with a fierce tramp, shoulders set square, teeth locked, eyes glaring, and hands clenched, he raged — cursing in his heart — using the most awful imprecations against his Maker, against Florence, against the stranger, toward whom, if she had smiled on him but once, he felt the most murderous inclinations. Oh! it was terrible, this loss of self-possession; but more awful the loss of that which he had staked his very soul to win. Strangely enough, he had thought that his patient persistence must at length be rewarded. Trusting and fearing alternately, he had watched the scales of his hopes, now vibrating this way, now that, but all the time with a secret encouragement. But now, as suddenly as a flash lights up the sky and disappears, every shadow of a hope had left his heart.

Willis Boynton had been the inmate of

Mr. Maynard's home since his tenth year, and he was now twenty-five. He was born in South Carolina, but his father dying, he was sent to Mr. Maynard, a relative, and one who had loved the dead man dearly. Though partly educated in the North, he did not lose the fiery nature that had been born in him. He had, however, for the sake of his child-love, crushed his wild impulses, and subdued his imperious nature. He possessed a small fortune that enabled him to realize his ambition to be a successful lawyer, and when anxiety and the loss of hope made it incumbent on him, to travel. His father was a Colonel Boynton, a man greatly esteemed for his wealth and social position, in South Carolina, and he was extremely proud of his lineage, though both father and mother were dead, and he had held no correspondence with the other members of his family. Mr. Maynard, for the sake of his friend, had always treated him as a son, and, immersed as he was in business, did not see the change that had gradually come over his household.

Willis Boynton did not meet Florence again until the next morning at the breakfast-table. Then she saw what one brief night of agony can accomplish. The face of her lover was as white as death, and bore the stamp of immeasurable sorrow. But he had wrestled with his anguish and partly conquered it. His greeting was subdued and manly, but he never once, if he could help it, looked toward Florence. In vain she strove to read his countenance,—he gave her no opportunity. For several evenings he absented himself; and whenever he met Florence, his manner was cool, though kind. Yet he seemed strangely pre-occupied, and more than once Florence caught his eyes resting upon her face with an expression she did not like; but, as he seemed to have given her up at last, she waited patiently.

Meantime the stranger, who was to have stayed but a few days, yet lingered. Sometimes Florence met him, and the meeting always made her happier. At length he ventured to call, and spent an evening at Mr. Maynard's. The old gentleman was delighted with his modesty and acquisitions. Like the rector, he pronounced him at once the most agreeable man he had met, and looked at Florence searchingly as he said so. She could not conceal the sparkle of her eye, or the quick blush that light-

ed up her whole face, and whatever her father might have thought, he kept it to himself.

For several evenings the stranger came, and at last, having taken board at the hotel, he seemed likely to settle for the winter. Now Florence had full opportunity to pity and sympathize with Willis Boynton. With the whole strength of her heart, its slumbering emotions at length fairly and thoroughly roused, she loved Gilbert Arlington. It was strange, she acknowledged to herself—it was perhaps unmaidenly, but it was also unavoidable. She could not help it. If he had never spoken to her one word of affection, she would still have loved right on—if he had left her forever, his image would still have been forever uppermost in her heart of hearts.

One evening when Gilbert was present Willis Boynton came in. He looked haggard and unhappy, as he always did of late. He did not try to master his passion by noble resolves, or manly patience. The sentiment he cherished was fast changing to revenge. If he could not wed Florence, no one else should, if it laid in his power. Florence was singing as he entered. Unconsciously her joyous tones took on a sadness, the atmosphere seemed clouded,—it would not ring as before with the sweet vibrations of her voice.

Willis cast a scowling glance that was not observed toward the twain. Gilbert bent like one privileged over the musician, carefully turned the pages, and seemed entirely absorbed in the voice of the singer and his too pleasant occupation. It was the place, the delightful duty that had been his, Willis thought, bitterly, and in his deep-set eyes gleamed the fires of vengeful disappointment. Under his arm he held a book, which he placed carelessly upon the centre-table. It was unique in binding, very different from the many richly covered volumes that lay scattered round, a pale, mottled cloth, much worn, and somewhat defaced. When the two turned from the piano, Willis had seated himself. His features assumed a smile of cordiality, though they little knew what smouldering fires it hid.

For some time the conversation was quiet and common-place. Florence watched anxiously, sure from his manner that he was uneasy and excited. At length the topics discussed began to cover a wider range.

Willis spoke of travel. Almost imperceptibly they were led to talk of Australia. As soon, however, as that theme was touched, the face of Gilbert underwent an entire change. Willis's eyes covered his continually, —he noticed the evident shrinking, the uneasy movement, and a smile of triumph lurked around his lips. All this was read by Florence.

"You have traveled much, I suppose?" said Willis, quietly.

"For three years," returned the other, speaking as with an effort.

"Have you ever been in Australia?"

Willis's tones, look and attitude, were a study. He sat leaning forward a little, his lips parted, his eyes fastened upon Gilbert, and his fingers working uneasily.

Gilbert Allington started; one instant and his blanched lip was quivering, his cheek devoid of all color, his eyes unsteady in their glance, and the whole expression that of a man exceedingly terrified. It was, however, only for a moment. Shivering once, he came out of the strange, trance-like manner, caught at his self-possession as they say drowning men catch at straws, and held it fast. With the utmost calmness, even while the astonished glance of Florence was fastened upon him, he answered the insinuating question.

"I have been in Australia; a glorious country it is, too."

"Did you reside there long?" queried Willis, trembling.

"Have you any particular reason for wishing to know?" asked the stranger, his voice changing to a sternness that was almost awful.

"I have," returned Willis.

"Then perhaps you will have the kindness to waive the subject for tonight, and meet me at some other place for the transaction of this important business."

Willis sank back in his chair, breathless. This answer had daunted him, had blunted the edge of his cool, revengeful audacity. He turned his eyes fiercely upon the stranger, as he said, —

"I will meet you tomorrow," and rising stormily, he left the room.

"This man seems to conduct himself strangely," said Gilbert, with a smile, turning to Florence.

She merely answered, —

"I don't understand it."

"I do," was his quick reply. "He is

evidently trying to pick a quarrel with me, for some insane purpose."

"You will not — meet him in anger, Mr. Allington!"

"Who, I? I have no wish to meet him at all, Miss Florence. I think I understand the secret of his animosity. We must overlook much that seems out of place in those who fancy themselves injured. Yet Heaven knows I would not injure any man! I have suffered too deeply myself."

"You must remember that he is Southern-born, and of a warmer temper, by nature, than we of a colder clime," she said, faintly, trying to excuse his abruptness, though in truth there was no reason why she should, save that love made her pity him, although he was not its object. Besides, she felt the tenderness of the glances that were bestowed upon her, and this appeal to her womanly sympathies made her anxious to soften the errors of one who had been very kind to her from her earliest recollections.

For some time nothing more was said. At last Gilbert arose hastily, almost nervously. He stood by the table, quite close to where she was seated. He gazed down upon her with one of his rare smiles, and seemed about to speak. The strange book that Willis had brought in lay directly under the light of the chandelier. Carelessly he lifted it in his hands, and as carelessly opened it, —another moment the book was on the floor, he stooping with a white face to pick it up again.

"Unpardonable carelessness," he said, restoring its disordered pages, and placing it in its old position.

Florence could not forbear seeing that again some storm of passion or regret was sweeping over his soul, for his hand shook as he put it back, and his chest heaved. The rare smile did not return that evening, and left alone, Florence, halting between love and a haunting fear, which like a presentiment saddened her, reflected bitterly upon the events of the evening. Something that was akin to hate sprang up in her bosom toward Willis Boynton, who seemed determined to let no opportunity escape him in which he might thwart or distress her. Thinking it over, she, too, lifted the book, and listlessly opened it. What made her heart throb heavily, the blood surge across her cheek and forehead, and her sight grow dim? It was a list of Aus-

trallan convicts for years back. What was the meaning of that ominous question which Willis had asked, that ominous book which he had brought,—that dreadful unquiet of the man she loved? Eagerly she perused it, looking with a sickening dread at the long array of G's and A's, and at last drawing a breath of relief when she saw that the one name that had power to touch her heart-strings was not there. With a sigh of weariness she placed the book down and tried to throw off the gloomy forebodings that oppressed her, but they would not away. Darker and more threatening they closed around her soul, till she wished in her anguish that she had never met this man, whose lightest smile was so inestimably precious to her. That night she slept but little, and when she did, her sleep was filled with distressing visions.

It was well that she could not see the other victim of the Southerner's malice. He sat in his room, without motion. The clock rang out all the hours, until it struck the one that proclaimed midnight. Then he lifted his face. In the dim light it was ghastly.

"And I was to ask her tonight,—and this fiend has come between me and happiness," he whispered, hoarsely. "I thought I knew his face, and I tried in vain to remember where I had seen him. Oh, it is cruel, cruel!"

He arose, changed his thick coat for a dressing-gown, drew on a pair of list slippers, and flung himself moodily in the chair again.

"I see," he murmured, "I am in this man's power, and God help me if he has no mercy,—and God help him, too."

Slowly the hours passed by, but he did not seek his couch. Toward morning, he paced the floor, back and forth; then, as daylight began to steal into the room, he drew toward him a box of papers (they seemed to be letters) and began to examine them, thrusting some aside, and placing others in a small heap. The sun shining in, still found him thus occupied. Scarcely tasting his breakfast, he placed the packet in his pocket, as the day deepened, and going out wended his way to the house of the rector. There he was closeted for two hours.

When he came out, the rector came with him, his face scarcely cheerful, but very friendly. As the two parted, the for-

mer placed his hand upon Gilbert's shoulder, saying, in a low tone,—

"Trust in God. 'I think it will all come out right.'"

"I hope so," said the young man, drear-ily.

When he returned to the hotel, he was somewhat startled to receive Willis Boynton's card. That gentleman was in the parlor. He met him with cool civility.

"I can hardly fail to understand the object of your coming," he said. "Will you walk up into my room?"

"Certainly."

Willis looked like a man prepared to do a deed of villainy.

They entered the pleasant private parlor together.

"Now, sir?" said Gilbert, in calm, clear tones. "I am not afraid of you."

"It was not my purpose, I assure you, to create fear; on the contrary, I wish to save one who is dear to me from unnecessary mortification,—from what, believe me, in one so sensitive, would cause death, perhaps."

"Go on, sir. What are your charges?"

"I met you in Australia, three years ago."

"Yes."

"Do you remember me?"

"I do, now. Well?"

"You were there as a convict."

"Go on," said Gilbert, calmly.

"Good Heaven! could I say more?"

"Yes, much more, Mr. Boynton. Go on."

"You were convicted of forgery when a very young man,—a clerk in a banking-house in Manchester, England. You see, I know all about it."

"Is that all?"

"Is it not enough?" exclaimed Willis, affecting extreme surprise.

"No, it is not enough. What has that to do with your present visit?"

"This, that I will not see Florence Maynard sacrificed."

"What is she to you?"

"Your coolness is audacious. She is my—my sister—that is, I regard her in that light."

"You love her."

"Sir?" cried Willis, turning red.

"I say, you love her."

"Very well; and what if I do?"

"You are a rejected lover, and wish to

wreak your vengeance thus upon her and upon me."

"You are impertinent."

"I am right."

"Great Heaven! do you think I would see any woman I respected wedded to a convict?"

Gilbert grew pale. He arose, walked a few steps, then came near Willis with a resolute face.

"I wish you to answer me one question," he said.

"What is it?"

"Did you ever hear me spoken of by any one?"

"I — Of course I did. Your course was extraordinary."

"How extraordinary?"

"You were considered a bookworm; and you were, too, a sort of preacher and a teacher."

"Yes."

"That was all."

"What! was that all that you heard of me?"

And his piercing eye seemed to read the very secrets of Willis Boynton's cowardly soul.

"Of course."

"Do you dare say that with deliberation, Mr. Boynton?"

"What do you mean?"

"This: that it was told you by everybody, — and you remember it too, — that I was an innocent man. Not one of the colonists, not one, — even the most hardened among those felons, many of them transported for life, — but believed in my entire innocence. You know I was always pointed out; that my story was always told; that I had a bitter enemy, against whom I was powerless, in England. Willis Boynton, look at me! In your inmost soul, you do not believe that I am guilty of the crime charged against me."

"I know that you were transported," said Willis, a red light gleaming in his eyes.

"And you know, such was the leaning toward mercy in England, though I could get no proof, that my punishment was almost commuted; that ten of the fourteen years were cut off. Yes, you know — you know all this. Now why do you persecute me?"

"Because you have not yet been proven innocent."

"But I shall be, so sure as there is a God in heaven. I am biding my time, that will one day come."

Boynton laughed insultingly.

"In the mean time," he said sneeringly, "with this cloud upon your reputation, you would take that innocent and confiding girl to the altar, and make her the wife of a convict."

"No!" thundered Gilbert. "You interpret my motives too readily by your own sinister thoughts. I should have done no such thing. Whatever I am, I am not a coward. Suffice it that I should have been honorable."

"Honorable!" he sneered: "honorable indeed!"

"Gilbert controlled himself. He had very nearly laid hands upon him; but insensibly, wickedly as Willis was acting, he remembered that he loved Florence, and it saved him.

"Yes," he said calmly: "I love her too well to cloud her life even by a suspicion. I believe she loves me, and would be willing to wait the issue of the evidence pending in my behalf."

The eyes of Willis Boynton blazed again; all the evil passions of his nature were roused. He too believed that Florence loved this man, who in weeks had won what he had toiled for for years with a patience and assiduity and self-denial that had been admirable in a loftier nature.

"I swear Florence Maynard shall not be your wife!" he cried, fiercely. "She shall not bend her pure head to the caresses of a felon. I will brand you, sir. You are a law-breaker: you have worn the chain, — the badge of penal servitude and outrageous crime. That is enough to make your name a by-word!"

Gilbert Allington shivered from head to foot. His eyes were wild, his hands clenched involuntarily. He came toward Willis, and even he was dismayed.

"Don't lay your hands on me!" he said, hoarsely. "I won't submit to it."

Gilbert regarded him for a moment. His face changed, his hands fell, his eye lost its fire.

"I never struck a man yet," he said, in a strange, earnest whisper. "I never will while God gives me reason, — much less you, for whom I feel a sovereign contempt. You are unworthy to be touched by me. Go spit your foul venom, if you will! go

ruin me. There's a God above. I believe in him, I serve him. You are powerless before him, and you cannot harm me ultimately. Your curses will fall upon your own head. You too perhaps will some time feel that lofty pride bent low: you too may shed the bitter tears of regret, and still be innocent. I do not hope this. I only say, as you would hope for mercy, have mercy."

"I do not need your advice, nor your good wishes," said Willis, hoarsely. "Go your own way: I shall go mine. If you do not leave the village, on your head be the consequences. I have warned you."

And thus they parted.

It was nearing twilight. All day poor Florence had been haunted by uneasy thoughts. Now, seeing a well-known form coming up the street, she seated herself, almost faint with apprehension.

Gilbert was very grave when he entered, but there was something so beautiful illuminating his face. Was it hope? was it joy?

"Florence," he said, "can we be alone for a few moments?"

"Certainly." She was re-assured by his manner.

"Florence, I have a story to tell you. A certain boy, an English boy of sixteen, incurred the undying hate of a man, because, years before, his mother had refused him her hand in marriage. He laid a plan which worked the boy's ruin,—at least it seemed so. The boy was transported for the crime of forgery, when he was as innocent as you are. The plan succeeded but too well. The heart of a gentle English woman was broken: she died the first year her son was away. The boy was recommended to mercy because there was strong sympathy in his favor. His punishment was only for a short term of years. In the colony he made many friends, among them one old, childless man, who had been there twenty-five years. This man died, leaving a large fortune to him. Thus, you see, God in part frustrated the plans of his enemy. That boy sits before you a man, who has been unjustly dealt by."

Florence started, uttered a low cry, and covered her face with her hands.

"Today I received a visit from your friend Willis Boynton. I will not tell you how he treated me,—what bitter, cruel words he used. He swore I should never

marry you, for I told him, as I have longed to tell you, that I love you." Florence did not shrink from him as he took her hand. "After he had gone, there came a strange guest to me, and sat down by my side. It was Despair."

Florence shivered a little.

"She did not stay long, however, for presently Faith crept in, and in her presence I grew a man again. I brought some old letters to show you that were sent to me from England, but in the usual mail to-day" (and now his face grew triumphant) "there came a most important letter. Florence, my enemy is dead: he had confessed all. I am clear not only in the sight of Heaven, but that of my country."

"Oh, I am so glad!" cried Florence, springing to her feet, her whole face beaming.

"It's a forgery!" cried a hollow voice.

Gilbert sprang to his feet: Florence uttered a cry of terror.

"So you have been listening?" said Gilbert, in tones of contempt. "Do you think I would be so insane as to contemplate even a deed like that, which I could by no possibility prove? No: I would rather cut off this right hand."

"I tell you I will brand you," cried Willis, like one frantic. "You have been a convict: never forget that!"

When Mr. Maynard returned, he was made acquainted with the full particulars. He called Willis into his study, and reasoned with him. He might as well have talked to a maniac. The man raved forward and back, and was so bitter in his hostility to Gilbert that his guardian was fearful some harm might be done.

"Tell me, will you let your child marry an Australian convict?" cried Willis, furiously.

"I shall say nothing about it. I have not yet made up my mind; but if my child loved the poorest man on earth, and he was honest, she should marry him. This Alington has been wronged, but I do not see but all is straight now. Such cases excite sympathy, not prejudice. I am sorry you cannot afford to be generous."

"I will tell every man, woman, and child in this town what brand he bears upon him!" said Willis, resolutely, defiantly.

Mr. Maynard was silent. He saw that this rash thing would be done. There was but one way to avoid it.

"Willi," he said, "listen to me. I have your life's secret also in my hands. If you harm my child, you are at my mercy."

The man glared at him.

"I would have spared you if I had seen any mercy in you; but you must be punished. Willis Boynton, your mother was a slave. I have your free papers, made out when you were six years old, up-stairs.

Now shall I be silent? or will you run the risk of my resentment?"

For one moment the room swam round; the next, Willis Boynton fell to the ground heavily. Weeks of dangerous illness made another man of him. He rose from his bed humbled and chastened, and at Gilbert's wedding he gave Florence a brother's kiss.

TOMMY BINGHAM.**BY WILLIAM L. WILLIAMS.**

ONCE there was a little boy named Tommy Bingham. He lived with his father and mother, in a nice house, in a pleasant country village. There was a large garden for him to play in, a swing hanging from the limb of an old apple tree, a seesaw, a barn to play in when the weather was stormy, and a pretty summer-house, covered with honeysuckles, where little humming-birds built their nests, and darted in and out all day long, much to Tommy's delight; and many hours he passed in trying to catch one of them, but they were always too quick for him. Tommy had a number of pets, and he loved them all very much. In the first place, there was Ponto, a great black Newfoundland dog, so strong that Tommy could sit astride of his back, and ride all around the garden. In winter time Ponto could be harnessed to a box-sled, and haul Tommy all around. He was a good dog, and everybody liked and admired him.

Then there was a gray and white pussycat, and her name was Victoria, but Tommy always called her Vic. She was a very good friend with Ponto, and oftentimes would lie down between his paws when he

was asleep, and take a nap, too. Tommy had taught her a good many things, and she was very knowing. When she ate her dinner, she would eat from the plate, and not pull the food off on the floor, as cats usually do. Mr. Bingham had bought a pretty little collar for Vic, and she always wore it round her neck. It had Tommy's name on it, and the name of the street he lived in.

Another pet was the canary bird, which hung in his handsomely-painted cage all the day long, singing and hopping from perch to perch, pecking his seed, and pluming his wings, as contentedly as if he had not been a prisoner all his life in that narrow cage. Tommy had three white rabbits, which he kept in a box in the barn. They had long white ears, and bright pink eyes, but they could not be let out, for they visited the neighbors' gardens, and made 'sad havoc there, so it was necessary to keep them shut up. In one corner of the garden was a pool of water, and near it was a stake driven into the ground; to this stake was tied a turtle, the string being tied to a hole in the edge of the turtle's shell. This was a funny pet. Tommy had bought it of a boy in the

street; the price paid was six marbles, a piece of red chalk, the stump of a lead pencil, and a broken gimlet.

These were Tommy's pets. Many little boys would think themselves very fortunate to have one pet, but Mr. Bingham allowed his little son to have as many as he would take proper care of.

Tommy was generally a pretty good boy; but sometimes he would get out of sorts, and be mischievous, although he was always sorry when he had done anything wrong, and would resolve to be a better boy.

One day his mamma was obliged to leave him at home all alone in the house. The cook had got angry about something, and had gone off without any warning, so that Mrs. Bingham decided to go to a distant street, and get a young girl to come and do the work, until an experienced cook could be procured. Tommy thought it was fine fun to have the whole house to himself. He roamed through every room, leaving all the doors open, and everything in confusion. At length he stationed himself at the parlor window, and knocked on the glass loudly whenever any one was passing. He would then hide behind the curtain, thus causing people to stop and look at the house in amazement. Tired of this, he went to the store-closet, and filled his pocket with dried beans; then, taking a long tin tube, which he called his bean-blower, he went to an upper chamber, and amused himself by blowing beans at the passengers in the street. Tommy thought it was grand fun to see the beans strike on a gentleman's hat or a lady's bonnet, and go bounding off, before they could see what had hit them. At last he saw the minister, Parson Snoffin, coming along. He ought to have had some respect for the minister, and let him go by; but Tommy did not have a very large bump of reverence, so he blew a bean, and hit the parson directly in the eye, causing it to smart woefully. This frightened him very much, and he was still more alarmed when he saw the reverend gentleman open the front gate, and walk up the doorsteps. The next moment the doorbell rang. Tommy did not care to go, so he peeped out of the window, and could just see the minister's hat, as he stood on the upper step. Again and again the bell rang, but Tommy did not stir, and at last Parson Snoffin went off; but after he had got into the street, he turned his head quickly, and Tommy dodged

out of sight again, but he felt that he was seen.

Pretty soon an organ-grinder came along. When he got opposite Mr. Bingham's house he slipped the organ off his back, and, resting it on a short pole, threw back the cover, and showed a lot of little images, bowing their heads, and waltzing round in a very comical manner. Then he turned the crank, and the organ commenced playing a very lively tune. Tommy was much pleased with this new attraction; he laid down his bean-blower, and hurried down stairs, put on his hat, and went out to get a near view of the wonderful organ. Now his mother had charged him not to go out of the garden until she returned, but Tommy was very eager to see the little images, and thought that it would be no harm for him to venture outside the gate for just a little while. The man who had the organ was not a very honest-looking man. He had thick black hair, all shaggy and unkempt, a rough and dirty-looking beard, with small shining black eyes looking out from among it. He seemed to be much pleased to have Tommy come out and look at his organ. When the tune was finished he held out his hand, as if he wanted something.

"What do you want?" asked Tommy.

"A penny," replied the organ-grinder.

"O, I haven't got any money," replied Tommy.

"Have you got anything that I can eat?" asked the man.

"Yes. I will give you a slice of bread," said Tommy.

"I shall like that. Have you a piece of cold meat?" was the next question.

"I don't know—I will see." And Tommy moved to go into the house.

"Wait a minute, sonny; I will go into the kitchen and eat it," said the man. And he walked into the front garden, and left his organ on the grass-plot, near the gate.

"Where's your mother?" inquired the man.

"She's gone out," replied Tommy.

"And left you all alone?"

"Yes. I can take care of the house," said Tommy, boastfully.

At this piece of information the man began to look around more boldly than when he first entered. He walked around the room, and handled things very coolly. He went to the secretary, and opening a drawer, said:

"Here is where your father keeps his money, isn't it?"

Now it must be remembered that Tommy was only six years old, and not very discreet. He did not know that it was very improper for him to tell where his father kept his money, or very silly to let a strolling organ-player into the house, and let him know that he was all alone.

"Yes; father keeps some money there, and grandpa's gold watch," he replied.

"Well, now, little boy, I will have that luncheon. Let me see—is it in this closet?"

"No; the things are in the kitchen store-closet," answered Tommy; and he led the way into the kitchen, and entered the spacious closet.

The stranger followed close behind, and took a keen survey of everything. On one side of the closet was a row of shelves, and on the other side, high up on the wall, was a single shelf, too high up to be of any use. The organ-grinder saw it, and taking Tommy in his arms, placed him on the shelf, before the little fellow was aware of it.

"Now stay there a while," said the man; and he commenced making a feast from the many good things which the closet afforded.

Tommy was frightened enough at such treatment. The shelf on which he sat was very narrow, and he did not dare to move, lest he should fall. The distance from the floor was great, and he saw no way of getting down. When the man had satisfied himself with the nice things he found, Tommy heard him go into the dining-room, and enter the closet there, and to his great horror he heard the rattling and jingling of the silver forks and spoons, and knew that they were being stolen.

"O dear—that man is stealing mother's silver, and the next thing he will be going to father's secretary. I wish that I could get down from this shelf." And Tommy glanced down from his lofty perch, to the floor beneath. The height was too great, and he did not dare to jump, so he began to scream as loud as he could, "Help! Help! Stop thief!" But nobody heard him, unless it was the thief himself, and he knew well enough that Tommy was powerless. But Tommy's screams were heard at last; for Mrs. Bingham returned about an hour afterwards, and was somewhat surprised to find the front door open. She entered the parlor, and was again astonished to see the secretary opened, and her husband's papers

all disarranged. Then Tommy's cries attracted her attention, and she hastened to find him.

"Why, Tommy Bingham, how did you get up there?" she asked, on discovering him in the closet.

"A hand-organman put me up here, mamma," he replied, "and I could not get down again. Has he gone away now?"

Mrs. Bingham pulled a table from the kitchen into the closet, and climbing upon it, she could reach Tommy well enough to take him down. He was glad enough to find himself on the floor again, but he felt sorry when he saw how the wicked man had stolen his mother's silver, and robbed his father of the nice watch that had belonged to grandpa; he wished that he had obeyed, and staid quietly in the house.

"What shall we do, mamma?" he inquired, his eyes filling with tears.

"We must send word to father, right off, and he will notify the police of the robbery," said Mrs. Bingham. "I wish I had some one to stay here while I went to tell him. Ah, there is Parson Snoffin going by; I will call him in."

So he went to the window, and called to the minister, who came to the door, his eye very much inflamed and bloodshot. He looked at Tommy, and said, solemnly:

"I am indebted to you for this inflamed eye, young man, am I not?"

Tommy hung his head, much ashamed, while Mrs. Bingham looked very much surprised, and wanted to know what he meant. Parson Snoffin then related how he had been passing the house, and Tommy had blown a bean into his eye. Mrs. Bingham was much-grieved to hear that her little boy had been so bad, and Tommy felt sorry, too, for his naughtiness, and he told Doctor Snoffin so, and was readily forgiven.

Mrs. Bingham then hastened to her husband's store, and told him of the theft, and gave him Tommy's description of the man. The police were soon in search of him, but could not get any trace of him. Tommy discovered the hand-organ in a thicket in the garden, where the man had hidden it, as it was too heavy and too conspicuous to be carried with him. In three days the news came that the thief had been arrested in a neighboring town, and would be brought on in an early train. All the silver ware and the gold watch were recovered, but the money he had taken was not recovered. In

the course of time the fellow was tried, and found guilty, and the judge sentenced him to a term of twenty years in the State Prison.

Tommy learned a good lesson from this adventure of his, and always after that he was a very obedient boy, finding plenty of enjoyment in harmless amusements, and

troubling no one. The old hand-organ was kept in the family for many years, and occasionally the children were allowed to turn the crank, and "make it go." Finally it got out of order, and was put away in the garret, where everything goes that wont go down stairs.

UNCLE JAKE'S COURTSHIP.

BY BLANCHE SHAW.

No, boys, — I did n't start with the idee of bein' an old bachelor; and, what's more, I don't believe that any livin' man ever did do it, for the longin' for a mate is born natural in every breathin' being. But, you see, this is a disappointin' world, and somehow I got mustered in on the unlucky side.

I went a-courtin' once. It was a long time ago; but, I reckon, not so long but I can remember most of the p'int. You see, I served my time to old Zeke Brown, father to Zeke who owns the forge over to Slater-ville. He has been dead nigh on to twenty years now; the old man, I mean. I always was a steady, hard-workin' boy, never tryin' to shirk work or sass back; and, when my time was out, the old man was so pleased with me, that he gave me, beside my freedom suit, an old silver watch and the offer of a share in the forge. This was a handsome thing in Brown, and a good chance for me; but, as is always the way with good luck, instead of makin' me thankful, it puffed up my conceit, and make me think I ought to have somethin' better. So I thanked Brown, and told him I had n't quite made up my mind what I'd do yet; but I guessed, any way, I'd take a rest for a spell, and look around.

Brown gave a couple of shorts, and then said "All right," and we separated.

I think it was about a week after this that it happened.

I had spent the time loafing around the village in my best clothes, telling folks the

time o' day, and putting on airs generally, — for I tell you, boys, times was different then, and a 'prentice just out of his time, with a watch and my prospects, was no small pertaters.

As I said, I had been goin' on this way about a week, when one day I met Alviry Hart comin' out of the grocery. Now, I had known Alviry all my life; but somehow this day she seemed to strike me all new. Her eyes was brighter, her cheeks redder, and her curls blacker. She seemed about the prettiest girl I had ever seen. Now, I never was much of a feller after the girls; in fact, they was the only thing I was afraid of, and I was skittish of them. As I said, I expected to be married some day; but that was a good ways off, and I thought it would come round in the natural way without my havin' much to do with it. But, just as Alviry turned the corner, the idee popped inter my head, —

"Jake, my boy, that's the girl for you. Strike in and win."

And the thought did strike in so deep, that the next Sunday night I walked two miles, in the teeth of a searchin' wind, to old Hart's. Talk of the love of the present day, boys! Where could you find the man who would do that now, eh?

I tell you, it was a cold walk; but when Alviry herself opened the door for me, and showed me inter the best room, where a bright fire was blazin', I forgot all about the cold, and would have waiked twice the

distance right over again without a growl or a-carin' a bit.

Well, we set and talked of the weather, the chances for sleighin', and other things, till the clock struck nine, and I heard the folks in the settin'-room go to bed. Then I hitched my chair a little closer, and we talked about singin'-school and quiltin'-bees for another hour, when I took another hitch.

Alviry blushed this time, and I begun to feel bolder.

Then all at once a loud mew broke the silence.

Alviry jumped up, and said, —

“O my!”

I jumped up too, and asked, —

“What 's the matter?”

“It 's Aunt Dolly's cat,” she says. “It 's out in the wash-shed; and I must catch it, and take it up to her, or I 'll get it in the morning. O dear! I wish it was dead.”

“Leave it out,” says I, “and may be it will be in the morning.”

“Oh, I would n't dare to,” says she. “And what would be the good? she 'd have another in a week. I must go for it. Mr. Simmons, will you please hold the light for me?”

“Certainly,” I says.

And I took up the candle, and followed across the settin'-room and kitchen to the wash-room that opened off the kitchen.

The door was shut. She tried to open it; but it stuck fast.

I gave it a push: but no go; and, gittin' riled, I let out a little of my muscle, when all of a sudden it flew open, and let in a gust of wind, that blew out the candle, and left us in darkness.

“O my!” says Alviry, “what shall we do?”

You see we did n't go round with our pockets full of matches in them days. So I says, —

“I 'll go back to the settin'-room, and light the candle.”

But she says, —

“You 'll never find the way. Give it to me, and you wait right here till I come back.”

I gave her the candle, and she left me there in the cold and dark.

I heard her open the parlor door, and then a low mew draw off my attention;

and, looking out into the shed, I saw a pair of shining eyes that seemed right in front of me.

“Heigho!” says I to myself, “here 's a chance for me to make a p'int. I 'll catch the beast before Alviry comes back.”

And I started for it.

But, alas for vain ambition! at the second, step, whack went my shins against something hard and sharp, and I pitched forward. I threw out my arms, to catch myself; but no good. The next minute my hands was tryin' to clutch some soft stuff that would keep slippin' through my fingers, and my head was buried to my shoulders in the same mess. Jericho! but I can feel that stuff now, — sousin' in my eyes, nose, and mouth, and slippin' down my collar. I thought my time had come; that I had found the bottomless pit, and was sinkin' into it. I tried to get my head up; but the blamed thing held me like a pump-sucker. I could n't scream, and I began to smother. At last, in despair, I gave a desperate jerk, and my head came up; but at the same minute one of my hands slipped from under me, and I came down on my stomach across something hard, that knocked all the remainin' breath and a fearful yell out of me, just as Alviry appeared with a light.

She echoed the yell, and turned to run. But her woman's curiosity got the best of the scare; and she come back just as I crawled to my feet, and stood dripping with the infernal stuff.

I expected, of course, she 'd come to my help. But not a bit of it: she just looked at me a minute, and then said, —

“O my! if he 'a'n't spilt all ma's soft soap!”

This was too much. I gave her one look of rage, and, yellin' “D—n ma's soft soap!” rushed from the house, leavin' my hat and overcoat behind me; and I took that wind on my bare head for two miles without feelin' it.

The next day, when I was in bed with influenza, Alviry's little brother brought me my hat and overcoat, with the message that his sister did n't want to have nothin' more to do with a young man that used profane language.

Well, boys, she got her wish, and I never went courtin' again.

UNMASKED.

BY MISS E. J. WHITNEY.

WHEN Ralph Fielding came to our little village, there was quite a commotion among the elder portion of the community, as well as among us girls.

"He was immensely rich," the gossips said, "and belonged to a good family. The girl who won him would be a lucky creature, to say the least."

And, certainly, we girls didn't need any one to tell us he was a handsome young fellow, with the most charming ways in the world. He didn't pay any one particular attention at first, but boated, rode and danced with us all. By-and-by he left all for Kate Earle, who was quite an heiress in her own right. Of course there were hard feelings and sharp speeches when this became known, and those who had been loudest in his praise, were the first to censure him.

Just at this time there were two more arrivals, Lucius Elsmere, the young minister, and Erle Faulkner, a lawyer, who came for his health.

Never before had the old church held so large and admiring an audience. Even the aisles were crowded, and numbers were forced to go away. The young minister was so eloquent, his graceful gestures so impassioned, and his voice so rich and clear, that he moved his audience at his will.

"Why are you not enraptured with our dear minister, as well as the rest of us?" inquired Mrs. Sterns, as we walked slowly

home after one of Elsmere's splendid sermons.

"Because I detest a thief," I replied.

Mrs. Sterns looked aghast.

"You are speaking of a minister of the gospel," she said, severely.

"Ah, but there are wolves in sheep's clothing," I returned, gravely. "And a man who steals his sermons from those who write and deliver them, is certainly a literary thief, and is therefore dishonorable."

"I've heard the same sermon afore," said old Mr. Lane, "but it came from Henry Ward Beecher's mouth."

"It ith their treathon for you to talk tho horridly about charming Mr. Elthmere, Emerelle Lanning," lisped Cora Ware. "I think him just elegant! I was introduced to him last week, and he has called three times, and I am going to the picnic with him. He thays I thould make a splendid wife for a minithter," consciously simpering.

Mrs. Sterns looked nonplussed, and good Mrs. Everett said in a low tone:

"Mr. Elsmere's sermons are not the products of his own brain."

Just at this moment the subject of our conversation passed us, giving Mrs. Webster a hurried startled glance. A strangely evil look played over his features for a moment.

Mrs. Webster gazed after him with a puzzled expression on her placid face.

"There is something strangely familiar about him," she said, slowly, "but I cannot

place him in my mind. I shall think after a while, for I am confident I have seen him before."

Even Ralph Fielding was forgotten, as the fair ones basked in the light of the fascinating clergyman's smiles.

Someway, I did not join in the general admiration. His smile was cold and cruel, and his eyes had a sly stealthy look, and flashed ominously at times; besides, I had seen and heard several things that placed him in altogether a different light.

My sentiments, however, did not diminish his regard for me; on the contrary, they only seemed to increase it, and, to my chagrin and dismay, he followed me everywhere, forcing his disagreeable attentions upon me, until I was half wild. I tried keen sarcasm, and icy coldness, but it could not pierce his triple-plated armor of self-conceit.

Father and mother were bright and shining lights in the church, and it was the most natural thing in the world for the minister to make long and frequent calls at our house.

I shocked mother—the good soul!—more than once, and brought many a reproof upon my defenceless head, by my rudeness to our clerical visitor.

I was returning home just at dusk from a neighbor's one night, when I saw Mr. Elsmere coming toward me. He was conversing earnestly with a dissipated-looking stranger, who was stopping at the hotel in the village. Not wishing to meet them, I slipped into the bushes, scarcely daring to breathe, as they approached my hiding-place.

"Now, Bob," the stranger was saying, as they passed so close to me I could have touched them, "if you play that game, you will fail."

"Fail" scornfully repeated Elsmere, "there is no such word in my vocabulary. The girl interests me, and I'd have succeeded before now, if it hadn't been for that cursed lawyer. I know women pretty well, Jim, and the little beauty will come round after playing coy and shy."

"Ha, ha," laughed the other, "you're a smart 'un, you bet! But I've seen the girl, and if she hasn't got bottled lightning in that body of hers, I'll lose my guess; and I don't believe even 'Gentleman Bob' can tame her."

"I'll do it or die," sternly. "If I find her too refractory, I may need your help."

And Elsmere's face took on an awful look as he lowered his voice—"in disposing of Faulkner."

"All right, old pal! I'm handy when the ready is plenty." And the two villains walked slowly away.

I came out of my hiding-place with a flushed face, and wrathfully muttered:

"Plot away, but you will find you won't succeed, my fine clergyman."

"Good-evening, Miss Lanning," said a voice close to my side.

With a little cry I turned, and saw Erle Faulkner looking at me, with an amused smile on his handsome face.

"Were your thoughts so pleasant that you did not hear my approach, and not until I had spoken twice?" he asked, reproachfully.

I shook my head, with a slight smile, as I exclaimed:

"I am so glad to see you, Mr. Faulkner." And with heightened color, I repeated what I had heard.

Erle listened without any comments, but his eyes flashed dangerously, and his voice was stern, as he said:

"The stranger registered his name as Harvey Sangers, from Montreal, but it is an alias, probably. He has persisted in talking to me, in spite of my coolness, and following me about."

"They are terrible men, Mr. Faulkner," my voice trembling, "so do be very careful."

"For your sake? Would you care?" he whispered, passionately, his eyes on my flushed face.

I bowed, for I could not speak.

"Emerelle, Relle," called my little brother Willie.

"Coming, my boy," shouted Erle; and I could not but notice the joyous ring in his voice.

"Promise me, Emerelle," he said, softly, as he held my hand at parting, "that you will be very cautious, and not go anywhere alone. I shall keep watch over you, for such villains as Elsmere and Sangers use every method to carry out their schemes."

"I promise," I faltered.

"God keep my darling!" he said, under his breath, as his lips brushed my hair.

After this I tried to avoid the minister more than ever, and father took me to task for it, because, forsooth, "I was standing in my own light," he said.

"If you wish me to leave home," I said,

quietly, as he finished, "I will go to Aunt Delmar's."

"I wish Mr. Elsmere to marry my daughter, not that she should leave her father's house," was the short reply.

Mother sighed, and her voice trembled slightly as she said:

"I can never give up my only daughter until a husband claims her."

"I guess you won't keep her long," spoke up precocious Willie, "'cause I know somebody that thinks a lot of her."

"You are talking about what you don't understand, my son," smiled mother.

"No, I aint, nuther. Just look at Rellie's face, if you don't believe me," triumphantly.

"Emerelle," said father, gravely, as I was escaping from the room. "I am unwilling to have Mr. Faulkner continue his visits here, as Mr. Elsmere tells me that he bears a very bad character."

"How dare he?" I cried, passionately, and burst into tears.

"Don't cry, Rellie!" exclaimed Willie; then angrily added:

"I wish the old minister was in the Red Sea!"

"Willie, Willie," reproved mother, "you must not talk so. Mr. Elsmere is a very excellent young man."

"I don't care, I hate him," he muttered. "He isn't half so good as Mr. Faulkner is, 'cause I've heard him swear when nobody was looking; and Mr. Faulkner says it's awful wicked to swear."

"Willie, leave the room," said father, sternly.

"Let me beg of you to let him remain," said Mr. Elsmere's smooth voice.

"Don't want to stay if you are here," was the sulky reply, as he marched out of the room, and came up to my chamber, saying, energetically:

"How I hate our minister!"

"It is very wrong to hate any one, my darling, although he is a very wicked man," I gently replied, as I smoothed his sunny hair.

"I can't help it if 'tis wicked, Rellie; but I'll try real hard not to any more."

"That is right, dear; for I can't have my brave little brother be a cowardly man, and it is very cowardly, as well as wrong, to hate any one."

"That's just what Mr. Faulkner said," replied Willie.

That night I told mother what I had heard. She was terribly shocked.

"Your father must know that he is harboring a viper that will repay his kindness with disgrace and death," she said, as she arose.

"No, no!" I cried; "not for the world would I have him know of it. You know he is very set, and might not believe it; or, if he was convinced, his changed demeanor would betray our secret at once. Besides, Erie—Mr. Faulkner," confusedly, "warned me to tell no one, as he has sent to the city for a detective to meet him here to-night."

"I pray he may not fail to come," said mother, nervously, a little later. "Your father is suddenly called away to be gone several days. Mr. Elsmere brought the telegram, and is going to remain here during his absence."

"Willie is gone to grandmother's, and we two women are alone with that villain," I gasped.

For a few moments we gazed into each other's pale scared faces, then I shook off my fears, and felt able to cope with the villain who strove to entrap me.

"Is Elsmere here now?" I whispered.

"Yes, and a friend of his, Mr. Sangers. O, may Heaven help us!"

"Heaven helps those who help themselves," I quoted, encouragingly. "All is lost if you give way like this, dear mother. I can slip out and go for help while you are at tea."

"Tea was over long ago," she moaned.

"While you entertain them in the parlor, I can slip out," I said, cheerfully; "so go down, and appear as if nothing had happened."

I waited until I heard the murmur of voices, then putting on my hat, I stole softly by the parlor door, and out into the garden shrubbery. Drawing a breath of relief, I started forward at a quick pace, when a hand grasped my arm, and Elsmere's hated voice sounded in my ears.

"Whither so fast, pretty one?"

"I am going to Mrs. Bryant's, on an errand for mother; so please release my arm, for I am in a hurry," I answered, as calmly as I could, although my heart bounded with fear, for the fellow had been drinking, and I dared not exasperate him.

"Nay, nay, sweet one, be not so cruel as to drive me from your presence," he went on, his bold eyes burning my face. "It's

not often I have such a glorious chance of seeing you alone." And he pressed my hand to his lips, as he walked by my side.

Concealing my fear and disgust, I said, lightly:

"Nonsense, Mr. Elsmere. You are a sad flatterer, I fear."

He eagerly protested that he had not said a tithe of the truth.

"Mother tells me you are going to favor us with a short visit, so I warn you to be chary of compliments, as you may wish you had never seen me," I laughed, carelessly and coquettishly.

"Impossible, my beauty!" fervently, as he gave me a searching glance. "Your father has given me per—"

I interrupted his flow of eloquence with a shriek.

"What is it?" hastily.

"There, it's gone now," I breathed. "Do let us get out of this gloomy place, for it always makes me think of a prison."

With a slight shudder, the impostor glanced nervously round, and quickened his pace.

Mrs. Bryant started up as I tapped at the door, exclaiming:

"Goodness, Emerelle, how you started me! Annie is over to her sister's, and it is so warm! I fell asleep. Come right in, Mr. Elsmere, and take a chair; father will be in in a few minutes. Your handsome face is always welcome, but I am uncommonly glad to see you to-night."

"Old Mr. Lane is worse; don't think he will live through the night; and it's enough to make your hair rise to hear him take on. He's led a terrible life, they say; even called himself a minister, so as to deceive, and carry on worse than ever. And it's no wonder he takes on awful—is it, Mr. Elsmere?"

"Not in the least, madam," gravely, a deadly pallor overspreading his face.

"And, seeing he can't die easy with such a load of guilt, and as he is calling all the time for somebody to help him, I say to myself, 'who could help the poor soul equal to a minister of the gospel?' and I should have sent my son after you, but he is away on a visit."

My heart gave a great bound as I thought, "Perhaps he will go."

But no. He excused himself by saying he was quite ill, and dared not expose himself further, as he had no one to watch ten-

derly over him, and soothe and cheer him when disease laid her withering hand upon him, with an expressive glance in my direction.

"Why don't you get married?" she asked, sympathetically. "You need a wife, certainly, and you have lots of pretty girls to choose from, if you haven't already made your choice," inquiringly.

"Ah! but I have made my choice, and got the father's consent, too, Mrs. Bryant," triumphantly, as his glowing eyes took in my blushing angry face.

"Well, well, my dears," exclaimed the good woman, cordially, "you couldn't do better, and you'll be the handsomest couple I ever set my eyes on."

What could I do or say at this? Not one word, for *there was not a name mentioned, only implied.*

"Mrs. Bryant," I said, abruptly, "mother wanted to borrow a cup of yeast, as I neglected to make any to-day."

"Certainly, my dear, certainly," bustling away. "Why won't you stay this evening?" she asked, as she returned. "Annie may be back, as she went over to Sue's yesterday."

"Thank you," I replied, quickly, catching a ray of light. "Mr. Elsmere had better remain here, if he is unable to visit Mr. Lane; but I am obliged to decline your kind invitation, as mother would be anxious about me. I will write a line to Annie, which please give her as soon as she gets home."

Running up to my friend's chamber, I seized a pen and wrote:

"Dear Annie, if you love me, don't fail to put this note into Erle Faulkner's hands as soon as possible. Father was called away by a telegram; will be gone several days. *The minister and a friend will stay at father's while he is gone.* Mother and I are alone."

"There," excitedly, "that tells nothing, yet Erle will see our danger."

"I can't persuade him to stay," said Mrs. Bryant, in a disappointed tone, as I returned to the room. "Says he's promised your pa to see to you, and he's going to."

"I have been to see Annie too many times for me to want any one to go home with me," I replied, smiling.

We had gone but a little ways before Elsmere began, angrily:

"How you did try to send me off to that

dying wretch, but I'm too old a bird to be caught with chaff, or old women, either," laughing coarsely.

My cheeks flamed fiercely as I sprang forward.

"You needn't try that game, my lady," seizing my waist, "for I can see through your little tricks, and stop 'em, too, by Jove! Come, now, give me a kiss from those luscious red lips, my beauty!"

"Release me instantly!" I demanded, haughtily. "How dare you stop me in this manner?"

"Dare!" scornfully. "I fear neither God, man, nor the devil."

"And you are a clergyman?" I asked, with biting scorn.

"No!" he cried, passionately; "no, I'm no canting hypocrite of a clergyman."

"The past few weeks tell whether you are a hypocrite or not," boldly.

"You shall pay for that, and all the rest of your cutting speeches, and your haughty ways, my proud beauty!" he raved. "You are mine, mine!"

"Never!" was my firm reply, "never. No power on earth shall make me yours."

"Ha, ha!" he laughed, sneeringly; "think you I'll wait for a priest to mumble a few words? Not I. You are mine, and I'll make you beg for the caresses you scorn now; for no power in heaven or hell can take you from me." And he clasped me passionately to his heart, covering my face with fiery kisses.

With a desperate effort I pushed the villain from me, and, striking my clenched hand into his face, I fled for home, uttering a cry for help.

With a volley of oaths, he rushed after me. I sprang forward like a deer, knowing more than life hung in the balance, but alas! just as I thought myself nearly safe, my foot caught in a treacherous vine, and I fell headlong. With a cry of despair, I struggled to my feet, to be caught in Elsmere's arms.

"A fine race you have led me, but I have you safe!" he cried, with savage exultation. "Cry, writhe and struggle as you will, you are helpless as a babe; you cannot escape, for you are mine, mine forever."

"Villain, take that!" thundered a voice; and the next moment I was snatched from Elsmere's arms, and the baffled wretch fell to the ground.

With a low cry of joy, for the first time

in my healthy life, I fainted in Erle Faulkner's arms.

"Is he gone?" I gasped, as my senses returned.

"My darling, my darling, thank Heaven you are safe!" exclaimed Erle, fervently, as his kisses fell fast on my white face. "That detestable scoundrel cannot harm you while I am near."

"I'm a desperate man, Faulkner," hissed Elsmere, rising from the ground, "and I warn you to give me the girl, for have her I will, if I wade through rivers of blood to get her."

"Away with you, miserable villain!" was the stern reply. "You will have to pass over my dead body to gain Miss Lanning."

"So be it!" savagely; and the sharp report of a revolver smote on the air.

With a low cry I threw myself before my lover.

"Two can play at that game, my fine fellow!" exclaimed a deep-toned voice, and again sharp reports broke on the startled air.

With a hoarse cry of rage Elsmere turned upon the new-comer.

"Take that, and a million curses beside," he suddenly cried, turning upon me.

There was a flash of light, a quick report, and a terrible pain shot through my arm, and with a moan I fell senseless. When I came to myself, mother was sobbing over me, and Annie Bryant stood by my side. With a shudder I closed my eyes, as I saw Elsmere prostrate on the ground, the life-blood flowing from a wound in his chest.

"If you wish to say anything, Bob, you had best say it, as you are bleeding internally," said the detective; for it was he who had come so opportunely to our aid.

"I've played for a high stake, and lost the game," coolly replied the baffled villain. "I'm no canting minister. I've been in prison twice; killed the jailor, and got away the last time."

"I came here to hide, and pick up what I could find handy. Cross-eyed Jim came too. I fell in love with her," pointing to me, "and I wouldn't hear to Jim when he said trouble would come of it. I've robbed and murdered, but I only regret that I did not kill Emerelle Lanning." The death-rattle sounded in his throat, and the miserable man fell back dead.

Here I lost consciousness again, and knew no more until the doctor set my arm. A long fit of illness followed that terrible

night, and my arm was nearly well when I recovered.

"How did you find me that fearful night?" I asked Erle, long after.

"Annie Bryant reached home just as you had left. She was frightened as she read your note, and calling me, as I was passing, bade me read what you had written. I understood it at once, and finding out the path you had taken, sped on after you. And I was just in time," tenderly.

"Thank God!" I murmured, reverently.

"I had met the detective at the station, and sent him after Elsmere. He heard he was at your father's, and on going there, met Sangers, whom he arrested; and then, guided by your mother, hastened after you. We owe our lives to him, as I was not armed."

Father came home crestfallen, indeed, as his telegram was a hoax to get him away from home. When he heard what had occurred during his absence, he vehemently ejaculated:

"The shameless villain! how dared he play such a desperate game? I am ashamed of myself for being so easily imposed upon."

When Erle presented himself asking for his reward, father said frankly:

"I was deceived by an impostor, Mr. Faulkner, and judged you hardly, but I ask your pardon for my unjust suspicions. I have made inquiries concerning you, and finding them satisfactory, I cordially give you my little girl here, feeling that I have gained a son. And I humbly confess that I believe a true woman's heart the best guide in love affairs."